

SCRAMBLE FOR A BETTER CLASS OF BARGAIN

How to cash in with the sales

Page 9

WHO'D BE A TEACHER IN A STATE SCHOOL?

Penis of the blackboard

ANDREW MARR: POLITICAL PREDICTIONS FOR 1996

Electoral campaign starts



Mersey mission: Members of the Stornoway Coastguard rescue team land at Lerwick in Shetland with a patient suffering from hypothermia

Photograph: Graeme Storey

Boy, 16, freezes to death as Britain suffers in the snow

...but experts say it's hottest year ever

NICHOLAS SCHÖN
Environment Correspondent

Much of Britain may be freezing in sub-zero temperatures and heavy snowfalls, but the world as a whole is now experiencing the final days of the warmest year since reliable records began.

With 11 months' data gathered from every continent and ocean, British climate experts are confident 1995 will emerge as the hottest in the last 140 years. This adds appreciably to the growing weight of evidence that pollution is detectably altering the earth's climate.

The 10 warmest years since 1860 have been since 1982, and the top 4 places all belong to the 1990s, according to the Meteorological Office's Hadley Centre and the University of East Anglia.

But the forecasters were yesterday registering figures at the other end of the scale. In Scotland, Tullach Bridge in the south-west Highlands was among the coldest places in the world, matching Helsinki and Stockholm at minus 20c, and colder than Moscow, with minus 18c. At minus 8c, temperatures were less extreme in the Western Isles, the Shetland Isles and parts of Aberdeen and Inverness, the areas affected by power cuts which had left some people without heat or light for four days. All but 100 of the 1,500 people still without power had been reconnected last night.

John Colquhoun, 16, froze to death while trying to walk less than three miles to his home after a car accident. He collapsed in sub-zero temperatures only a mile from the scene of the accident early on Christmas Day. He and his friend had tried to walk to their respective houses

after their car skidded off the road and became stuck in snow, near Mauchline, Ayrshire.

His sister, Mandy, 19, said: "He was wearing just a thin jacket and it had started snowing hard when he was trying to walk. As far as we know, he tried to find shelter, fell asleep and just died in the snow."

But leaving Britain's current cold snap aside, meteorologists have confirmed that from January to November this year, temperatures around the planet were, on average, 0.41 degrees Celsius above the long-term averages for the 30 years between 1961 and 1990.

The current record-holder is 1990, for which the "anomaly" - the departure from the 1961-90 average - is 0.36 degrees. The experts are confident that even if the globe as a whole experiences an unusually cold December in 1995, it will be too late to prevent this year from emerging as the hottest.

"It's very unlikely that 1995 will not be the warmest year," said David Parker, in charge of climate records at the Department of the Environment-funded Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research in Bracknell, Berkshire.

The scientists use average temperatures from land stations and ships in estimating how much warmer or cooler the world has been than the 30-year "average of the averages".

Government climate scientists from around the world have now advised politicians that man-made climate shifts are already underway. "The balance of evidence suggests a discernible human influence on global climate," they concluded at a United Nations meeting in Madrid last month.

TURN TO PAGE 3

Billions at stake as Forte steps up takeover war

MATTHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

The embattled hotels and restaurant group Forte yesterday pitched the City's highest profile takeover battle into frenzied confusion, unveiling a £1bn agreed sale of its Happy Eater and Little Chef restaurant chains to brewing and catering giant Whitbread.

The move, part of an increasingly desperate defence against an unwanted £3.2bn bid from Granada, the television and leisure company, led City analysts to admit that the takeover battle was now too close to call.

If the restaurant deal goes through, Whitbread, already the owners of Pizza Hut, TGI Fridays and Beefeaters, will become the UK's biggest restaurant operator - bigger even than market leader McDonald's - when it takes on Forte's 430 Little Chef and Happy Eater outlets.

The agreement is the latest

salvo in the highly hostile and personal battle between Forte and Granada, the maker of the long-running television soap opera *Coronation Street* which is run by the cheerful but ruthless Gerry Robinson, one of the City's most respected managers.

Granada's £3.2bn bid has galvanised management at Forte, which has sold off companies worth £160m since the offer was launched, in a desperate attempt to ward off Granada's unwanted attentions. The deal with Whitbread, which is conditional on the Granada bid lapsing, has raised the bid stakes to fever pitch.

Whitbread's late entry into the saga means that three of the UK's most influential companies, which between them own pubs, luxury hotels, restaurants, two TV television companies and a retail chain, are now battling centre-stage in what has become one of the bitterest struggles in recent memory.

Granada, predictably, criticised the proposed sale yesterday. Mr Robinson, Granada's Irish-born chief executive, said from Donegal: "This is certainly a brilliant deal from Whitbread's point of view, but it isn't in the best interests of [Forte] shareholders." He claimed that Granada's management could double the profits of Forte's restaurant business within two years.

Word of Forte's secret negotiations with Whitbread emerged over the Christmas holiday weekend, as Mr Robinson was spending time at his family home in Ireland. Forte Chairman Sir Rocco Forte, who was forced to rush back to London last month when Granada unveiled its initial offer, relished turning the tables on his absent adversary yesterday.

"I suspect that Mr Robinson didn't have time to finish his Christmas pudding," he said. Mr Robinson responded: "I had plenty of time to finish," and added that the deal did not worry him. "Shareholders must now make a choice as to whether they prefer this offer or our more generous offer for the whole of Forte."

If Sir Rocco, the heir to the Rocco family's hotels and catering business, manages to pull off the Whitbread deal, he will be left with a company only two-thirds its original size but with most of its hotels business intact and with debt virtually wiped out. Sir Rocco said yesterday: "The whole point of our strategy is to get down to being a focused hotel group. Forte owns the luxury Grosvenor House in London, as well as five-star properties in Europe."

Granada accuses Forte of engaging in a fire-sale dumping of assets, and says the management only began to act

effectively following the unveiling of Granada's hostile bid last month. Sir Rocco disputes this, claiming that the group had already embarked on a restructuring, and that Granada was attempting to get Forte on the cheap, just before the hotel cycle swings upward again.

The dramatic battle is expected to continue into next week, as Granada considers whether to raise its offer and Forte continues to seek buyers for non-core businesses. Forte is also expected to promise a special dividend for shareholders if they agree to dismiss the Granada bid and stick with current management.

Unless it decides to throw in the towel - unlikely, say insiders - Granada will now have to come back with a sweeter offer, which analysts expect will have to top £600m, to take the offer to about £3.8bn.

Pressure on Granada, page 16
Comment, page 17

The Whitbread empire

Whitbread's outlets if the Forte deal goes ahead:

- Public houses: 2,600
- Threshers' off-licences: 1,603
- Pizza Hut: 239 (plus 100 takeaways)
- Beefeaters pubs: 270
- TGI Friday restaurants: 18
- Brewer's Fayre pub restaurants: 230 (plus 50 opening this financial year)
- Costa Coffee cafes: 41
- Little Chef and Happy Eater: 430
- Travelodge budget hotels: 127
- Welcome Break motorway services: 26
- Cote France motorway services: 55

Prisons drop plan to ease overcrowding

HEATHER MILLS

Home Affairs Correspondent

The Government is set to abandon some of its basic standards of care for prisoners as governors struggle with record numbers of inmates and shrinking budgets.

An internal Prison Service document reveals that the service is to jettison its policy on reducing cell overcrowding and is set to reduce the number of hours that inmates are allowed to spend out of cells.

To save more money, the service is also considering closing up to three low-security jails, a move likely to place even greater strains on the service. Those which Home Office sources have identified for possible closure at a saving of around £7m are Blantyre House, Kent, which holds 100 prisoners, Kildavering, Cleveland, with 75 prisoners and North Sea Camp, Lincolnshire, an open jail holding 200.

Staff, probation officers and reform groups have warned of

the risk of riot as pressure on the service grows. Work, education, probation and welfare services for inmates have already been cut in many jails as governors implement cuts of more than 13 per cent in the £1.6bn prison budget over the next three years. An increasing prison population, which soared to 57,700 earlier this month, has led to inmates being "doubled up" in single cells and locked up for prolonged periods.

Coming so soon after the prison inspectors' walk-out

highlighted squalid conditions in Holloway prison, the threat to abandon basic standards has alarmed reformers. They say jail conditions are deteriorating to levels of the late 1980s, identified by Lord Woolf as a trigger for the Strangeways riot.

The inspectors at Holloway were said last week to have been ashamed at the filth and lack of care for vulnerable prisoners - the mentally ill, the abused, foreign nationals and pregnant women - while the prison operated an "overzealous security

regime that included chaining women on hospital visits.

Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary for the National Association of Probation Officers, said Lord Woolf's agenda has now been all but abandoned: "1996 looks like being one of the grimmest in penal history. What is happening at Holloway should make the Prison Service rethink its decision to drop minimum hours out of cells from 12 to eight hours and avoiding doubling up as jail's key performance indicators."

Instead the Prison Service ought to use training and drug testing as indicators of a jail's performance. Key recommendations of the recent Leamont inquiry into prison security and the escape from Parkhurst.

But overcrowding and the cash crisis facing the country's 134 jails places a question mark on many of the 127 recommendations. Officials have already decided the key proposal, to build a super-secure prison for the country's most dangerous inmates, is too costly.

IN BRIEF

MoD's £4bn overspend
Officials at the Ministry of Defence have presided over cost overruns and waste-offs totalling almost £4bn in the past year, according to new figures. Page 2

United close gap
Manchester United reduced Newcastle United's lead at the top of the FA Cup Premier League to seven points by defeating their rivals 2-0 at Old Trafford. Page 24



Sheikh liked sale so much he bought the shop

LOUISE JURY

A tradition as British as the Queen, the Christmas turkey and the Boxing Day fox-hunting row was upheld yesterday when giant queues marked the start of the January sales.

Selfridge's in London nipped up £1m of sales before lunch after more than 800 people queued all-day for the best of the bargains.

The MetroCentre in Tyne-side, Europe's biggest shopping complex, was besieged two hours before opening time and one store in Sheffield was so packed it had to ration customers in and out.

As cash registers jingled in defiance of any gloomy economic forecast, one London store-owner had more good news than most. In a remarkable echo of that advertising jingo, "It was so good I bought the company", an Arab sheikh walked into one London store and bought it.

Well, almost. According to Martin Barnett, the owner of Charlotte's soft furnishings and furniture shop at Marble Arch, a sheikh and his aides walked in on Boxing Day and made an offer.

The sheikh spoke through an interpreter and said, "What is your lease? You're for sale."

I explained we weren't for sale, we were having a sale," Mr Barnett said yesterday.

But the sheikh was adamant. Mr Barnett had sold a complete set of stock to the sheikh's cousin, also a sheikh, last year. Their respective third wives discussed the purchase and the second sheikh decided he must have one too.

Mr Barnett, being a cautious man, telephoned Dubai for confirmation. The first sheikh confirmed that the second was an honourable man. Mr Barnett said a £5,000 cash down payment on the spot finally initiated the £350,000 deal agreed yesterday.

Everything about the store, a family-run business producing hand-made furniture and providing Laura Ashley-like furnishings, will now be reproduced in a shopping centre in the Arab Emirates. "He said he liked the concept," Mr Barnett said.

A boon indeed for a firm struck by misfortune before Christmas when the French strikes made deliveries of £75,000 hand-made stock impossible. But then, Mr Barnett is no stranger to weird happenings. He was the man whose Santa was last year arrested as a suspected illegal immigrant. Sales guide, page 9

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news

Defence chiefs 'wasted £4bn this year'

CHRIS BLACKHURST
Westminster Correspondent

Officials at the Ministry of Defence have presided over cost overruns and write-offs, "wasting" almost £4bn in the last year, according to figures released today.

These last 12 months must rank as an *annus horribilis*, even by the standards of the MoD. Promises by Michael Portillo, Secretary of State for Defence, that he would convert waste into

weapons, so far have not been met, says Labour, prompting the party to suggest that the department be renamed the "Ministry of Waste".

David Clark, Labour's defence spokesman, has compiled a report, "7000 - The Waste of a Year", detailing the MoD's financial mismanagement this year. Heading the list of horrors is the continued rise in the cost of the Eurofighter 2000 programme. The actual increase alone is now put at

£2.2bn, according to a parliamentary answer to Dr Clark. The delays in the project are leading to huge bills elsewhere. The lives of the Tornado F3 and Jaguar aircraft are having to be extended until the Eurofighter is ready, at a cost of £104m.

The Trident submarine base at Faslane on the Clyde was described as "mismanagement on a grand scale" by the Commons Public Accounts Committee. The construction of new facilities for Trident submarines

was budgeted at £1.1bn but has cost £1.9bn - an £800m rise.

A report by the National Audit Office, the public finance watchdog, found that 23 of the MoD's 25 largest projects had a forecast total increase of £645m. The Army's £24m replacement for the Land Rover, the RB4 Army Light Vehicle, was taken out of service after a series of crashes and technical problems. Its withdrawal meant the MoD had to buy 394 vehicles from an Austrian firm to

send to the troops in Bosnia. More than £200m was invested in developing the Trigat long-range anti-tank missile. The MoD then decided to order a type of helicopter that did not carry the Trigat system.

In the weeks leading up to the Defence Costs Study when more than 18,000 people lost their jobs in military cuts, it was revealed that £380,000 had been spent refurbishing the home of Air Chief Marshal Sir Sandy Wilson. Another £205,000 was

spent on his previous residence in Germany.

Hundreds of millions of pounds has been wasted on re-fitting ships after the Cold War, which have now been put up for sale; the management of ministry telephone lines, the royal dockyards self-off and disposing of the married quarters' estate were other areas which swallowed taxpayers' money. Obtaining the advice of consultants on the sale of the houses has absorbed £5m so far.

Another ministry vehicle that is lying dormant is the *Prince of Wales*, an airship bought for £2.6m for surveillance operations in Ulster. According to a parliamentary answer it was damaged at Boscombe Down in May, and cannot be repaired. "These figures speak for themselves," said Dr Clark. "The Government has failed signally to tackle waste in the MoD. Its incompetent approach is doing untold damage to Britain's armed forces."

Simpler government: Ministers to report monthly

Heseltine leads new attack on red tape

JOHN RENTOUL
Political Correspondent

The Government's war against Whitehall red tape is to be "stepped up" for at least the tenth time since the last election, as it emerged yesterday that ministers are to be ordered to present a monthly report to Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, on any planned new regulations.

Mr Heseltine was charged by the Prime Minister with "hacking back the jungle of red tape"

in 1992, when he was President of the Board of Trade. Since then the Government's deregulation unit, for which he retains responsibility as John Major's deputy, has identified 1,000 regulations for abolition.

But right-wingers point out that the Government creates about 1,400 statutory instruments - rules which do not need parliamentary approval - every year. Hence the requirement, from 1 January, for a monthly report justifying new statutory instruments to be sub-

mitted to Mr Heseltine or his deputy, Roger Freeman, the public services minister.

Mr Heseltine's Cabinet committee on domestic policy has also ordered ministers to stop "gold-plating" European directives - when departments make regulations which are more restrictive than required to satisfy European law. Ministers are believed to have criticised draft Home Office fire regulations which were felt to go further than EU safety law.

The renewed initiative against red tape follows a seminar earlier this month at Chevening, Kent, the Foreign Secretary's residence, reported in yesterday's *Financial Times*. The meeting is said to have identified four areas where red tape could be cut: health and safety, food hygiene, building regulations and taxpaying.

However, the Labour Party yesterday was scornful of the plan. "Declaring war on red tape is one of those things Tory ministers always do when they are in need of an applause injection," said a Labour spokesman. He pointed to recent analysis which showed that 71 per cent of the regulations now in force had been introduced since the Conservatives were elected in 1979.

The first high-profile drive against red tape was the review by the Market & Spencer boss, Sir Derek Spencer, in 1982. Lord Young of Grafton, then a Cabinet minister, promised to create jobs by cutting regulations affecting small businesses, and legislation followed.

Mr Major again promised to "simplify rules and regulations" in his 1992 election manifesto. Since then, however, the tide has shown little sign of turning. A year later, small businesses reported a "significant" increase in red tape, with the Government and the European Commission held to be equally responsible.

The crusade also suffered a setback when the trade minister responsible, the right-winger Neil Hamilton, was forced to resign in October last year over "cash for questions" row.



Appeal: The father of the missing French student Celine Figard appealing for help in the search for his daughter

Help us find Celine, begs father

DANNY PENMAN

The anguished father of Celine Figard, the French student who disappeared while hitch-hiking near Newbury nine days ago, appealed for the return of his daughter yesterday.

Ms Figard, 19, disappeared after accepting a lift from a lorry driver at the Granada services on the A34 at Chicheley near Newbury in Berkshire.

The driver who picked up Ms Figard, an accountancy student, could have offered to take her to Salisbury. From there she intended to get a bus to Fordingbridge, Hampshire, to spend Christmas with her cousin.

Her father, Bernard, said: "Celine, if you can hear us, if you can see us, please show yourself. Your family and friends are waiting."

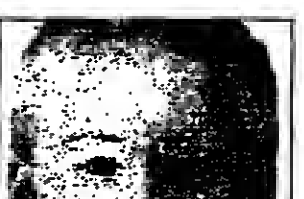
Mr Figard, 44, a farmer from the village of Ferrières-Les-



Celine: Seen hitching a lift. Right: An identikit of the driver

Scay, 220 miles south-east of Paris, said his daughter was a "timid but very happy person" who was serious about her school work. He appealed for any information that might help the police find his daughter. He said: "Please keep helping us. We need to find Celine."

Detective Superintendent Des Thomas, who is leading the enquiry which has been up-



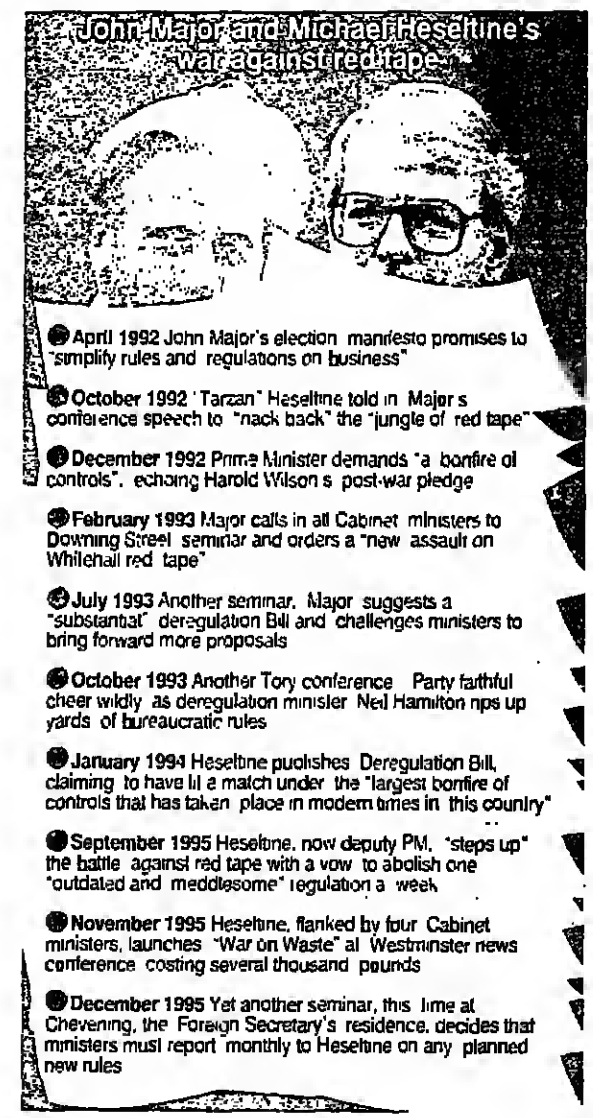
graded into a murder investigation, said: "We all hope and pray we will find Celine alive - it will be the best thing that could happen - but experience has shown that is not necessarily the case after this amount of time. I wish it were otherwise. I have no doubt at all we will find this lorry driver. My great concern is we will not find him in time to recover Celine."

More than 100 officers are now involved in the investigation. Police spent yesterday searching roads between Newbury and Salisbury, but apparently found no trace of Ms Figard.

Detectives are also examining video footage from surveillance cameras at the service station where she disappeared. The search will resume at first light today.

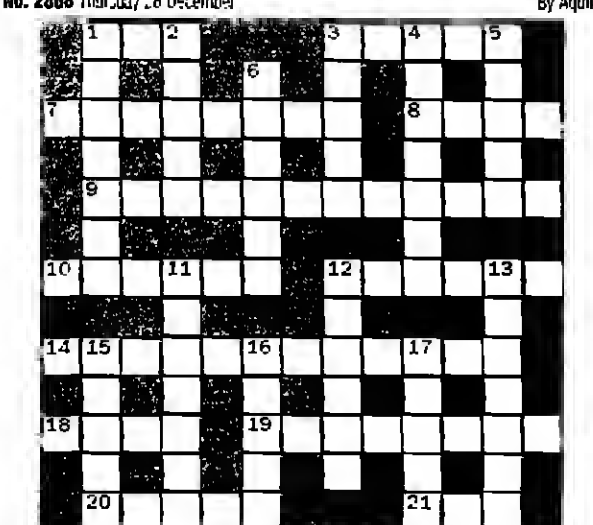
Police also issued posters featuring a picture of Ms Figard and an artist's impression of the lorry driver. The driver is described as well-built, ginger-haired, and has a distinctive chinstrap-style beard with no moustache.

He was driving a white Mercedes truck which was towing a light grey 38-40 tonne refrigerated box trailer. Ms Figard is slightly built, 5ft tall, with brown wavy shoulder-length hair and brown eyes.



concise crossword

No. 2868 Thursday, 28 December By Angela

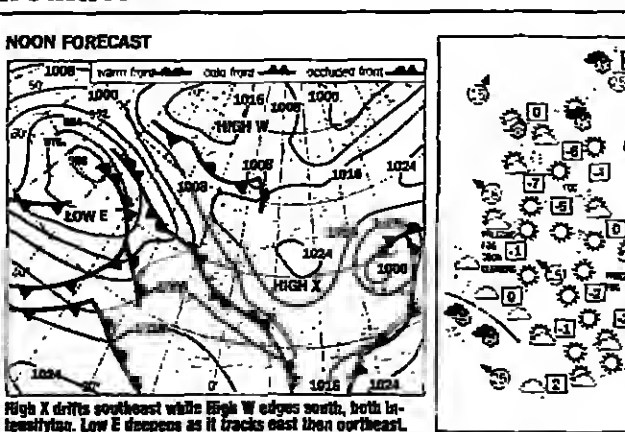


- ACROSS**
- District on W coast of India (3)
 - Assess, ponder (5)
 - Estrange (8)
 - Soft soggy mass (4)
 - Expectation (12)
 - Greatest possible degree (6)
 - Percy ... Shelley (6)
 - Estate car (7,5)
 - Trademark (4)
 - Revelation, jolt (8)
 - English river (5)
 - Grass as fodder (3)
- DOWN**
- Bold and chivalrous (7)
 - Alarm, warning (5)
 - Young offspring of dog, wolf etc (5)
 - Catalyst, momentum (7)
 - Word of greeting (5)
 - Good luck charm (6)
 - Result (7)
 - Guard against (6)
 - Truthfulness (7)
 - Game fish (5)
 - Beginning (5)
 - Circumference (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
Across: 1 Rubber, 4 Sheep (Rubbish-heap), 8 Swami, 9 Hessian, 10 Leather, 11 Rear, 12 Kit, 14 J-in, 15 Arch, 18 Yew, 21 Ruse, 25 Iksome, 26 Baghdad, 27 Vault, 28 Evade, 29 Grilly.
Down: 1 Re-ull, 2 Brr-ada, 3 Epiphany, 4 Sash, 5 Elize, 6 Penny, 7 Shark, 13 Talk over, 16 Croquet, 17 Treble, 19 Wilde, 20 Sentry, 22 Sigma, 24 Edge.

Notes

weather



High X drifts southeast while High W edges north, both intensifying. Low E deepens as it tracks east then northeast.

WORLD WEATHER

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Pressure
London	10	10	10	10
Paris	12	12	12	12
Rome	15	15	15	15
Moscow	5	5	5	5
Delhi	25	25	25	25
Sydney	20	20	20	20
Auckland	15	15	15	15
Wellington	12	12	12	12
Christchurch	10	10	10	10
Dunedin	8	8	8	8
Wellington	12	12	12	12
Christchurch	10	10	10	10
Dunedin	8	8	8	8

LIGHTING TIMES

Location	Light	Dark
London	8:06	16:06
Paris	8:16	16:16
Rome	8:26	16:26
Moscow	8:36	16:36
Delhi	8:46	16:46
Sydney	8:56	16:56
Auckland	9:06	17:06
Wellington	9:16	17:16
Christchurch	9:26	17:26
Dunedin	9:36	17:36

AIR QUALITY

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Pressure
London	10	10	10	10
Paris	12	12	12	12
Rome	15	15	15	15
Moscow	5	5	5	5
Delhi	25	25	25	25
Sydney	20	20	20	20
Auckland	15	15	15	15
Wellington	12	12	12	12
Christchurch	10	10	10	10
Dunedin	8	8	8	8

Out and about with AA Roadwatch

For 0336 401777 (in UK) and 0336 401777 (in UK)

Housing market 'revival' challenged by Labour

CLIFFORD GERMAN

A row broke out yesterday over the prospects for the housing market, the health of which could have a decisive influence on the next election.

Hard on the heels of a report from the Halifax Building Society forecasting a modest revival next year, Labour's housing spokesman Nick Raynsford rushed to counter the rays of optimism in the report, and blamed the Government for the continuing depressed state of the market.

Hundreds of thousands of people have had their homes repossessed and many more are in negative equity, Mr Raynsford said, quoting a recent report by the stockbrokers UBS Phillips & Drew which estimated that 1.4 million people

were in negative equity in the third quarter of the year, an increase of nearly 30 per cent on a year ago.

Rather than helping homeowners in difficulty, the Chancellor has cut mortgage tax relief and reduced help to unemployed homeowners, Mr Raynsford said.

Although the Halifax admits the Chancellor did nothing directly to help revive the housing market in last month's Budget, it is forecasting a 10 per cent increase in the number of properties changing hands next year and again in 1997, but only a 2 per cent rise in prices next year, rising to perhaps 5 per cent in 1997 and 1998. The forecast is based on the fact that mortgage interest rates are at historically low levels, and more importantly, many people now

believe interest rates are likely to remain at these levels or even fall further, the Halifax argues.

House prices are once again low relative to income after falling an average 15 per cent over the last six years, mortgage rates have started falling again in recent weeks, earnings are slowly edging upwards, personal taxation will come down in April, and many experts agree that the outlook for the housing market is better than at any time since 1989.

This is counterbalanced, however, by continuing job insecurity, cuts in income support for those who do lose their jobs, and increasing pressure on individuals to pay for insurance policies, and pension plans as well as savings and investment schemes, which compete with mortgages for any surplus income.

Hostage parents' hopes fade

JAMES CUSICK
London
MUKTAR AHMED
Srinagar

Parents of a British hostage held in northern India said their "hopes were crushed" yesterday, when the Foreign Office rejected reports that a British negotiator was talking to the kidnappers.

Mavis Mangan's son, Keith, is one of two Britons held hostage by Kashmiri separatists for almost six months. An American and a German are also being held captive by

the militant group, known as al-Faran.

Tim Devlin, Tory MP for Stockton South, where Mrs Mangan lives, said the Foreign Office had informed him that the kidnappers had agreed to deliver Christmas gifts to the hostages. The gifts included winter clothing and tapes and letters from the Mangan and the family of the other British hostage, Paul Wells. He also said he had been told by the Foreign Office that the High Commission in India "had made contact" with the kidnappers.

Mrs Mangan told the *Independent* she was telephoned by the Foreign Office yesterday and told to ignore Mr Devlin's comments. "We were told there was no truth in what he said. There had been no meeting. No negotiations at all."

"We were so disappointed. One minute we were all on cloud nine. Now we are simply crushed to the floor again."

However the Foreign Office denied the two versions of the actions were contradictory. A spokesman said: "We are not confused."

"However we can make no comment on this."

Millennium fund £8m

DAVID PEARSON

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news

After three years, one month, 18 days and £1.7m, the Scott inquiry prepares to deliver its damning report

CHRIS BLACKHURST
Westminster Correspondent

The long-awaited report of the Scott inquiry into the arms-to-Iraq scandal, which could threaten the careers of some ministers and senior Whitehall officials, goes to the printers next week.

More than three years since the inquiry was set up, after the collapse of the Matrix Churchill trial in which government ministers were found to have withheld evidence helpful to the defendants' case, it is finally drawing to a close.

The report will mark a watershed in British politics, opening the Government and Whitehall to unprecedented scrutiny and is likely to dominate the political arena for months.

It will soon be rolling off the presses at the HMSO printing plant in Bardonsey, South London. Produced in four volumes, with appendices, the mammoth document will run to 2,000 pages.

So confident is HMSO of having a best-seller on its hands that it has ordered thousands of copies. It will go on sale in HMSO's shops when the report is officially released.

That decision rests with Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, to whom, technically, the inquiry is reporting. He will receive an advance copy and must



Sir Nicholas Lyell, Attorney General, could be criticised for asking Ministers to sign orders withholding documents from the Matrix Churchill defendants



William Waldegrave, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, faces charges that he was involved in changing arms control guidelines without Parliament being informed



Kenneth Clarke, Chancellor of the Exchequer, signed "gagging" order and has said he would resign if criticised by report — though this is unlikely.



Malcolm Rifkind, Foreign Secretary, signed Public Interest Immunity certificates, but is likely to be put in the clear by the inquiry report



Peter Lilley, Secretary of State for Social Security, signed the Public Interest Immunity certificates but is not expected to be criticised by the report



Michael Heseltine, Deputy Prime Minister, is certain to be cleared by Scott, after initially resisting Sir Nicholas Lyell's request to sign the certificates

of attacks on Sir Richard — accusing him of not understanding the way Whitehall works and needs to work, of not giving people a fair hearing, of not allowing their lawyers to cross-examine others — that it appeared the future of the Government itself was at stake. That feeling has been heightened by tough talk. The Prime Minister has intimated he may not necessarily accept the report's conclusions. Senior government sources have claimed that Mr Clarke, who once said he would resign if he was criticised by Scott, may find his resignation, if offered, was not accepted.

After all that, two ministers in the frame would be seen as a damp squib. But Scott is about much more than ministers signing gagging orders. Around 60 officials are possible targets for criticism, for not communicating with each other or for giving ministers incorrect or inaccurate information.

If that happens, and most senior ministers walk free or are criticised but turn on their own officials, the top civil servants' union, the First Division Association, promises a battle.

For the inquiry team and the Opposition — and most Tories desperate to put the whole thing behind them — Sir Richard's report cannot come soon enough.

then decide, with the Prime Minister and government managers, when it should be published.

The likeliest date is some time in the last week in January, or possibly in the first week of February. The report will be presented to Parliament and will be accompanied by a statement, most probably from Mr Lang.

Once the report is out, the inquiry will start winding down its operation. The background papers will be filed at the Public

Records Office at Kew for future generations to pore over, and the Scott inquiry premises in Victoria will be returned to the Department of Trade and Industry, while the 13 staff will go their separate ways.

Whether some of them will be welcomed back, after three years away, by their old colleagues remains to be seen. For a while back in November 1992 that they were about to become immersed in something quite so politically sensitive or, at times, so acrimonious.

Strangely, though, while attacks on the inquiry and its methods, notably from Lord Howe, raised the temperature — and led to soul-searching on the part of some members of the inquiry — there has been a marked cooling-down in the past few months.

From mid-October onwards, say those close to the inquiry, there was a change of mood, on both sides. Sir Richard and his staff suddenly seemed much more positive and definite as to when their report would appear:

hostility towards the inquiry in some Government quarters appeared to soften.

Soon afterwards, reports appeared, saying that in the end only two current senior ministers — Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney General and William Waldegrave, Chief Secretary to the Treasury — would be directly criticised. Sir Nicholas for proferring the advice to other ministers to sign the public interest immunity certificates that denied the Matrix Churchill defendants a fair trial and Mr

Waldegrave for agreeing with two former ministers, Alao Clark and Lord Trefgarne, to change the guidelines on exports to Iraq and then failing to tell Parliament.

If true — and nobody has offered any irrefutable evidence, and certainly no direct quotes from the report have been produced to support the case — there would be a collective sigh of relief on the government benches.

Compared with some predictions of what Sir Richard's

2,000 pages could contain, criticism of only Sir Nicholas and Mr Waldegrave is small beer. It would mean that three other Cabinet ministers, each of whom carry more political weight and would be more prized targets for the Opposition, have avoided blame. They are Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Malcolm Rifkind, Foreign Secretary and Peter Lilley, Secretary of State for Social Security.

At times during the inquiry, such has been the vehemence

Scott inquiry: For the record

Duration: 3 years, 1 month, 18 days (so far)
Evidence: 200,000 pages of written material
Witnesses: 270 submitted written evidence
82 gave oral evidence
61 gave evidence in public, 21 in private
Cost: £1.7m
Staff: 13 full-time, including the judge
Report: 4 volumes with appendices, totalling 2,000 pages plus 10,000 pages of evidence to be published later

The key players



Sir Richard Scott, the Vice-Chancellor of the High Court, Chancery Division, decides to work full-time to get back to full-time judging



Presley Batendole QC, chief interrogator for the inquiry, wants to return to practising at the Bar. She is member of the chambers of Colin Ross-Munro, which specialises in commercial law and also includes Lord Lester



Christopher Muthuqumar, secretary to the inquiry, formerly worked in the Treasury Solicitor's Department. Understood to want to return, which may be difficult if report criticises colleagues

David Price, press officer to the inquiry, formerly at the Department of Health. He hopes to return to another press job in the government service. Close to retirement age.

Suicide fears for 'bullied' boy

A missing schoolboy thought to have thrown himself into the sea was the victim of bullying, his father claimed yesterday.

Eighteen-year-old Andrew Smith disappeared more than two weeks ago. His bicycle and back-pack were found yesterday hidden on a cliff top alongside the Old Harry Rocks, at Swanage, Dorset.

Extensive police searches for him using divers, tracker dogs and a coastguard helicopter have drawn a blank.

The A-level student was last seen at Poole Grammar School on 11 December at 8.40am.

His father, Ken Smith, speaking from the family home in Parkstone, Poole, said: "Until we get him back here we won't know for certain but we are 99 per cent sure he has gone because of pranks and verbal abuse at school. From what we have learned since Andrew went missing it has been going on for about six months."

Apparently a group of about five or six so-called mates were involved. They would do things like go to a party together and thought it was then a great idea to order a taxi but leave Andrew to make his own way home from about five miles away.

"He never spoke to us about it. He was also given verbal abuse. He had been skipping school for about three weeks before he went missing."

He said he had confronted teachers but had been told bullying could not have happened because it was not tolerated at the school.

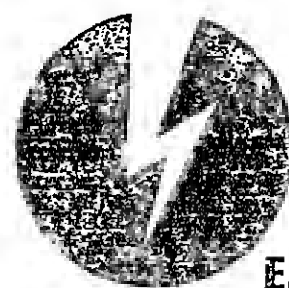
Mr Smith, 55, said the family had not had any Christmas celebrations this year. "We haven't had a Christmas this year, it's as simple as that. We did the usual things like cook the turkey but it might as well have been beans on toast," he said.

Mr Smith and wife, Sally, 45, were due to travel to London to launch a television appeal for their son yesterday, while police were launching another search.

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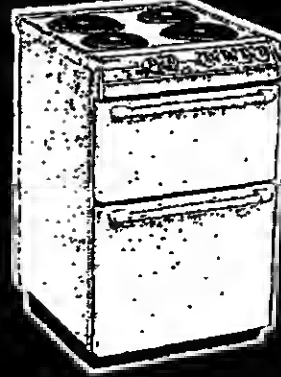
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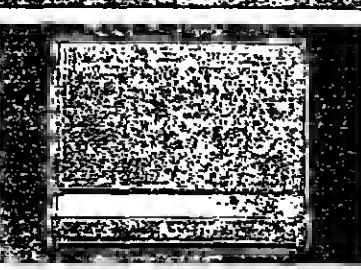
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Charter to tackle fears over care of mentally ill

The Government is to introduce special measures to combat concern about attacks on members of the public by severely disturbed psychiatric patients.

The move, disclosed yesterday by the Secretary of State for Health, Stephen Dorrell, sets tough new standards designed to make the streets safer.

The Mental Health Patient's Charter will ensure:

- Patients get help from nurses or social workers, if they need it, after discharge;
- Home visits will be available within four hours for urgent cases and within two working days for non-urgent cases;
- Patients will not be sent home if it is thought there could be the slightest risk to carers, relatives or the public;
- Tough new time limits for assessing a patient's illness aimed at reducing waiting lists;
- Information on the effects of drugs and other treatments will be available for patients;
- Patients will be allowed to wear their own clothes, have personal possessions and more privacy in hospital while receiving treatment;
- Patients can expect access to a lawyer if necessary and will be able to choose whether they want a man or woman to act as their key worker;
- Explanation of diagnosis will be made available;
- Anyone detained for 28 days or more has the right to apply to a Mental Health Tribunal and get a medical opinion from an independent doctor.

Mr Dorrell hopes the charter, unveiled in the new year, will go some way to quelling public fears about schizophrenia which began in 1992 when Jonathan Zito was killed by Christopher Clunis at Finsbury Park tube station in north London. There

have been a number of other incidents and last August Gerald Malone, the health minister, warned NHS chairman to improve standards and stop patients falling through the care in the community net.

They were asked to review their services and report back to the Secretary of State. He is due to announce the outcome of the exercise shortly.

Mr Dorrell said: "When there is public comment about the mental health services, people often latch on to the phrase 'care in the community' and say this means the Government is not interested in hospital care, which isn't true."

"The phrase has become misleading because it has come to imply that the only type of mental health service we are interested in delivering is one based on community health and that is not the case."

"What we are concerned to do is deliver a spectrum of care, so that someone who is acutely mentally ill has their acute needs met in a hospital; that there is care available in a sheltered setting for those who need it; that there is community care for those who need it; and crisis teams for meeting crisis needs."

Mr Dorrell admitted, however, that in parts of the NHS, "we have not succeeded in delivering standards of care that we would all want to see".

Kate Harrison of the mental health charity, Mind, said patients needed more help, not a charter. "Services for people with schizophrenia are not good enough. We need more resources across a spectrum of services from decent housing and occupations to social support. The fear is that a charter is simply more paper that won't provide what's needed."

End of an era: Heritage group in mission to revitalise former miners' institutes



Community centre: Doorman Mervyn Richards on duty at the Lewis Merthyr Working Men's Institute in Porth, Mid Glamorgan. Photographs: Rob Stratton

Symbols of pit pride running to ruin

MICHAEL PRESTAGE

The decline of the coal industry in South Wales is set to claim another victim: the miners' institutes.

Only about 50 of the original 350 or so buildings remain. The halls, now in a perilous state, once provided a centre for education and entertainment in the communities. The buildings date largely from around the turn of the century, with miners traditionally donating a penny a week of their wages for their construction and upkeep.

The Victorian Society believes efforts should be made to preserve a great tradition. Paul Brindley, of the South Wales branch, said: "The institute was a vital part of the community. In most towns and villages it was the most impressive building as



Seat of culture: The Parc and Dare theatre in Treorchy, which is run by the local council

they were largely built at the height of Victorian architecture. Without some protection more will fall into decay."

Many of the institutes have been turned into bingo halls, su-

permarkets or drinking clubs. Others have been lost through continued disrepair. Earlier this year, Nixon's Memorial Hall in Mountain Ash was gutted by a fire. A similar fate befell

the institute in Aberaman. But some do still survive and play a valuable role. One of the biggest is the Parc and Dare Institute in the Rhondda town of Treorchy. The theatre has been

fully restored and doubles as a cinema. The rooms have a variety of uses, from a dance studio to a meeting place for the local model railway society.

In the 1970s, the National Union of Mineworkers foresaw difficulties in maintaining the building and a deal was struck with the local council, which now staffs and runs it. The manager, Enid Bowen, said: "We were lucky the institute was taken over otherwise it would have suffered a similar fate to most of the others."

A spokesman for Cadw, the body charged with protecting Wales's historic buildings, said a survey was under way to identify those of special interest and give them listed status. It has already given protection to three and the case for another six is being considered.

IRA payout 'admits murder'

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

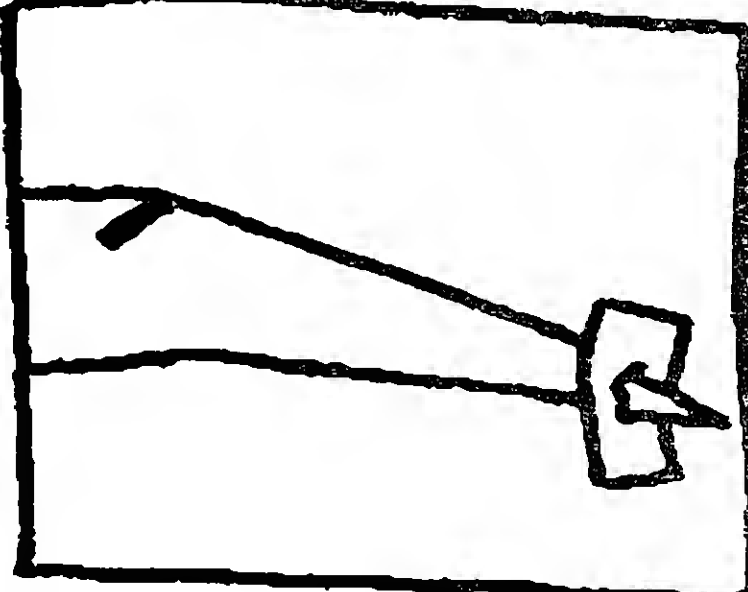
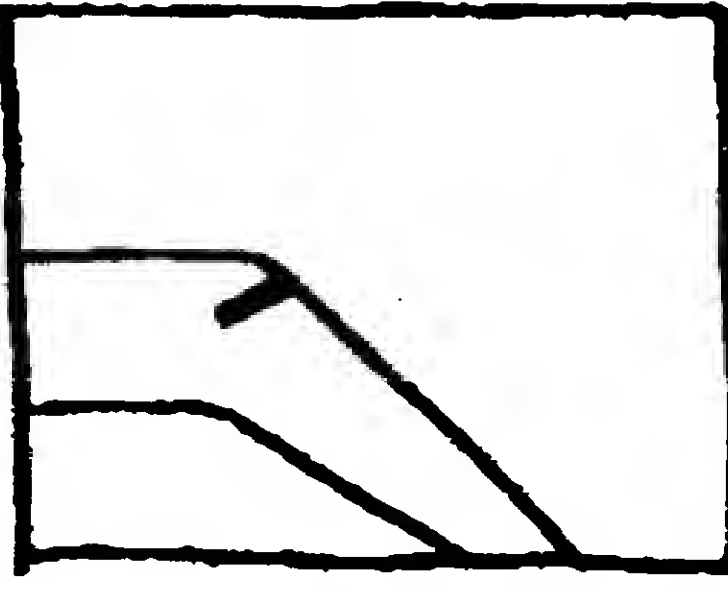
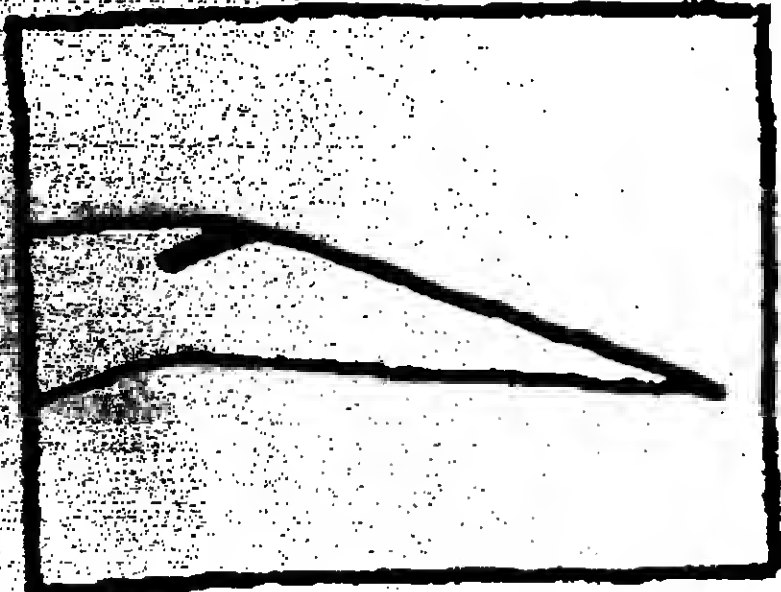
The payment of nearly £40,000 to relatives of the three IRA terrorists killed in Gibraltar is a government admission of murder, the brother of one of the trio said yesterday.

Fuelling the political row which erupted following the Government's decision to comply with a European Court order and pay the families' legal costs, Niall Farrell - brother of Mairead, who died in a hail of SAS bullets - said: "This is a clear indication that the British government now accepts the verdict of the highest human rights court in Europe, that they unlawfully killed or, in plain English, murdered our loved ones."

His words were dismissed by the Government, which emphasised that the payment was for costs only - not compensation - and that short of withdrawing recognition of the Strasbourg court, it had no choice but to pay up.

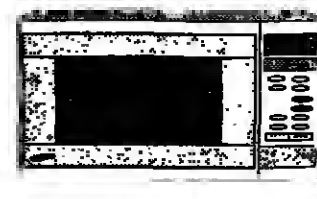
Last September the European Court of Human Rights cleared the Government of operating a "shoot-to-kill" policy, but ruled that the 1988 gunning down of the three "unlawful". By a 10-9 majority the judges decided Farrell, Sean Savage and Daniel McCann could and should have been arrested and given the Government three months to pay the families' £38,700 costs. The decision infuriated the Government, which said it would review its support for the European Court. Payment of costs indicates it was not prepared to risk international condemnation for withdrawing. While Euro-sceptic MPs were furious at the payout, lawyers acting for the relatives have written to the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe - responsible for implementing the court's verdict. They said the unprecedented verdict and the British response could not be taken lightly.

Whose law is it? Page 13



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international

Policing the peace in Bosnia: French hail warring factions' decision to abandon key positions as sign that war is really over

Serbs surrender front-line posts

EMMA DALY
Sarajevo

Amid a relentless snowfall, a handful of French soldiers, accompanied by a dog and an armoured personnel carrier, walked slowly down a broad avenue scanning the shattered buildings around for signs of life. Had they stood here a few weeks ago, "we would all be dead", Major Rodolph D'Almont said cheerfully.

The street, lined with coils of razor wire set up three days ago by French troops of I-For, the Nato Implementation Force, was once the front line between Bosnian government and Serb forces. The red brick spire of an Orthodox church, shrouded in scaffolding, loomed in the near distance. "It was used for years as an observation post and sniping point by the Serbs," the major said. But the soldiers are gone now, withdrawn under the Dayton peace plan, which required the warring armies to pull back from around 40 designated positions around Sarajevo by midnight last night.

Elliot, a ginger mongrel, apparently of Alsatian descent, wandered the street seeking a fresh scent that would alert his handler to the return of any local troops, but found nothing. So far, none of the combatants have tried to return. "Two nights ago we saw someone with our night-vision equipment, but it was only an unarmed soldier who had forgotten some [non-military] things," Major D'Almont said. In a square nearby, a few Bosnian civilians lobbed snowballs amid the turned earth of the vegetable gardens that helped to sustain the city through the siege.

Rough-hewn steps leading to a muddy, water-logged trench marked the lines of its defence. The French were impressed by the trench networks on both sides: this, of Bosnian construction, led from a building under the pavement, over pipelines and under cables, to

an abandoned school building. "Be careful - all the rooms facing the Serb side are booby-trapped," Major D'Almont said.

Two basketball nets hung in the hall, decorated by a mural and graffiti of a later generation. "The Islamic Republic of Bosnia," said one wall. "Sex Drugs Rock and Roll," said the other. The Bosnian Army sand-bagged the building and cut gun-sights in the walls, knocked holes in walls and ceilings and strung telephone wires to aid communication.

"They were very good," the major said. "In four years of war you learn a lot."

A few hundred metres away, Lieutenant Magon de la Villehuchet, of the 17th Airborne Engineer Regiment, brushed the snow from a large green anti-tank mine and carefully unscrewed the three detonators. At least 18 mines were strewn across the narrow street, abandoned by Bosnian Serb soldiers for I-For to clear.

"Anti-personnel and anti-tank mines that we recognise we can disarm and take away," the lieutenant said. "But when, for example, you find rifle grenades that have not exploded, you must destroy them on the spot. You can't pick them up because if you move them they might explode in your hand."

A rifle grenade and a hand-grenade lay in the snow under a piece of plastic explosive laid by the French, a wire trailing to the detonator some 30m away. A bright flash, a cloud of black smoke and, a split second later, the crack of an explosion, and a fresh crater, black and smoking, scarred the street.

Buildings on both sides of what is known as the "Airport Settlement", built depressingly close to the flight path to house workers at Sarajevo airport, are utterly destroyed, the facades blown away and the supporting walls riddled with bullet-holes and shell scars.

But again, the soldiers are gone. It is the same story at the "Chetnik Café", a bunker on the mountain road to Pale, the Bosnian Serb capital that affords a glorious and lethal view of Sarajevo.

"We are very confused. We've received conflicting orders over the last three days - most soldiers have left already and most equipment," Vojislav, a 27-year-old Serb soldier, said gloomily. His only companions were two dogs and a drunken comrade. "I feel bad about [withdrawing], of course," Sekul Skokovic, another soldier, said. "The circumstances that forced us to leave are an international disgrace. We're leaving with a heavy heart." But, he added: "We are honourable people and we will respect the agreement."

Major D'Almont is an optimist who believes the retreat from positions such as the school in Dobrinja is a sign the war is over: "They would never withdraw from such a place if they wanted to fight on. They would find it almost impossible to retake it. Anything is possible after four years of war... but everything leads us to believe peace is starting to settle in."



Settling down: French I-For troops patrol the ceasefire line between Serbs and Muslims in the Sarajevo suburb of Dobrinja. Photograph: AFP

Women sang in praise of Zulu slaughter

ROBERT BLOCK
Port Shepstone

When 600 Zulu warriors loyal to the Inkatha Freedom Party descended on the village of Shobashobane on Christmas morning to massacre their political rivals, they brought their women to cheer the murderers and rob the victims.

"When these people started shooting, the women accompanying them were ululating and singing songs of praise," said a 12-year-old girl who survived Monday's slaughter of African National Congress (ANC) supporters on the south coast of the troubled KwaZulu-Natal province.

The girl, evacuated by police to Port Shepstone, said she was too frightened to give her name.



President Mandela: Party supporters massacred

She had seen a friend shot, and had lost an uncle who had been chopped to pieces by extremists wielding long knives.

By the time the shooting, stabbing and burning was over, at least 19 people were dead, 22 wounded, and scores more made homeless. The attackers razed 87 huts and houses and ransacked dozens more. As many as 100 people are unaccounted for.

KwaZulu-Natal has been the site of a running war between the ANC of President Nelson Mandela and the Inkatha movement of Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, which has killed 13,000 in a decade of tit-for-tat slaughter.

But the stories from survivors and police investigators of the attack on Shobashobane - tales of women goading men to kill while they looted homes, of children shot and stabbed without mercy - made the KwaZulu-Natal south coast

sound more like Rwanda, where, during last year's organised killing of ethnic Tutsis, Hutu women routinely encouraged their men with chants.

According to a spokesman for the KwaZulu-Natal police, Superintendent Bala Naidoo, the participation of women in political violence was uncommon, but everything about Monday's attack was extraordinary. "This is the first time we've seen an attack like this on such a large scale in broad daylight," he said. Between 600 and 1,000 men armed with guns, spears and knives hit the village in a well-orchestrated attack.

One of the first victims was the local ANC chairman, Kipha Nyawusa. He died after his stomach was slit open with "bush knives".

A teenage boy, Mzwandile Zulu, told a group of journalists how he fled the *impi*, or columns of warriors, after he was shot in the arm and the buttocks.

"I managed to get to my feet while the others were running," he said. "The impi was getting close to me. My arm was burning and so was my bottom."

Shobashobane was an ANC enclave in a vast pro-Inkatha area. ANC supporters fled last year because of violence and threats but returned four months ago. Since then, according to ANC officials and police, Inkatha supporters have placed the village under virtual siege, cutting it off from Izngolweni, about 20 miles inland from Port Shepstone.

Many survivors said the police were warned that an attack was imminent, but they did little except to disarm ANC members.

"It took a long, long time until the police arrived. We sat there watching our houses burn, and very, very much later we saw a police van approaching and it actually didn't do anything," the 12-year-old girl said.

Jacob Zuma, the ANC provincial leader, said yesterday that the police failed to act quickly because they were biased in favour of Inkatha.

The military precision of the attack has raised suspicions that a so-called "third force" alliance of Inkatha extremists and right-wing security officials may be behind the recent wave of killings in the province.

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NY declares war on Times Square sleaze

DAVID USBORNE
New York

An unlikely coalition of sex-shop owners and civil libertarians is about to take on New York City in a bid to block plans to sell out the peep-show soul of Times Square to Madame Tussaud's and Mickey Mouse.

The cleansing of Times Square of its historical association with commercial sex is behind draconian new zoning laws just passed by the city that would have such a severe impact on "adult" businesses that, of the 107 porn shops and theatres operating in Manhattan, only an estimated 19 would survive.

At the same time, New York's conservative mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, has successfully lured developers to brave the X-rated no-man's-land of West 42nd street and 8th Avenue and transform it into a hub of family-friendly entertainment, including the owners of Madame Tussaud's and, above all, Disney.

The plan's opponents assert, however, that it is tantamount to censorship in violation of the free expression rights of the American Constitution and would wipe out part of the essence of New York's tapestry personality. They intend to file two lawsuits against the city next month.

"These people, they're de-

trick, a diamond district and district of thieves on Wall Street, why not a district for adult uses? If you have read anything about American sailors you know that when their ships come in to New York they visit Times Square and they don't just want to look at the zipper signs, hopefully they unzip their zippers too."

Under the zoning laws, porn businesses will not be allowed to operate within 500 feet of schools, day-care centres, houses of worship or even of each other. Unless they change what



Under attack: Porn shops will not be allowed to operate within 500 feet of schools. Photograph: Gamma

they sell, most will be forced either to relocate in industrial areas in Manhattan or the outer boroughs or close down. "Nothing I sell is obscene," contends one sex-shop owner who asked to remain anonymous. "But of course if I change my stock and sell violent mur-

der and horror movies I'll be perfectly OK. That's ridiculous."

Joe Rose, the chairman of New York's planning commission, dismisses the defenders of the porn industry. "There are people who think it contributes to the city's character, that it's an asset. We don't believe that to be case," he said, pointing out that the sanitising of Times Square was a prerequisite for Disney agreeing to invest in the area.

At the heart of the impending legal battle, aside from the

sive. Crime in the neighbourhood has fallen 42.7 per cent in two years and property values have soared 65 per cent in a decade.

"We expect that we will prevail once we get into court," predicted Herald Price Fahringer, a high-price New York lawyer who will represent the Coalition for Free Expression which brings together all the sex-shop owners. "I think it's embarrassing for this city to have this kind of blatant censorship of what people can read and hear. But we are in a very conservative era in this country and this sort of thing, unfortunately, is typical."

Also filing suit next month will be the New York Civil Liberties Union. "A chill is settling over New York City which has a long history as a symbol of a robust commitment to free expression but where now we see creeping censorship," said its director, Norman Siegel. "We recognise that there are a lot of people who find this offensive expression but the courts recognise that this is none the less expression that has a right to be protected."

The porn emporia of Times Square, as well as the concentration of gay sex merchants in Manhattan's West Village, arguably also offer a legitimate, even important, service. "A lot of my customers come for sex education and sex therapy," the porn-owner contended. "And while their wives go shopping at Lord & Taylor up the



Manhattan transfer: New laws aim to clean up Times Square, an area long associated with sex. Photograph: AP

road, husbands can come here and window-shop or masturbate rather than going out and getting into high-risk sex."

The battle to save the smutty and slightly dangerous heart of Times Square is already

partly lost, however. The street sign at 42nd St now reads "New 42nd St" and a large banner hangs on the old Amsterdam Theatre announcing the arrival of Disney as its new owner. The blue cinemas are mostly

chained up now and only as you reach 8th Avenue do you rediscover the vulgar flashing signs of the last survivors of the porno era, like Nimmle Video ("Bi, Amateur and She-Male") and the Golden Nugget.

"Look at all the different faces on people walking down 8th Avenue today," sighs Bill Dobbs. "And they want to turn them into Disney creatures, all shined up and Middle American. But this is New York."

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APPEAL FOR THE CHILDREN OF BOSNIA

Could you send a better gift this Christmas?

Disinfectant, nappies, washing materials — not the first things to spring to mind when you think about buying presents this Christmas. But for mothers in Bosnia who have almost nothing left with which to care for their children, these basic essentials mean the world. And they can be found in each baby box sent with a donation in Britain to a despairing mother in Bosnia, via British charity Feed the Children.

As peace in Bosnia is trapped in the corridors of power, a young mother sheltering in a bunker waits in vain for the return of her husband. Bosnia, however, is not the only place where the really important issue is tonight: how to keep her children safe from disease and infection in appalling conditions and being cold. She has been living on the edge of life since October, when she was forced to flee her home in Vukovar, Croatia, with only five minutes to pack a couple of bags and leave with 22,000 other people along five kilometres of road in Khajenduh Valley.

She is one of 14,000 mothers in Bosnia and Croatia who have received baby boxes full of the basic essentials they need to help protect their children from the filthy conditions in which they are surviving: clean nappies and baby cream to soothe burning nappy rash, soap to wash, urine-soaked babygros and dirty nappies, antiseptic for cuts, disinfectant for the muddy floors of their shelters.



Children in Bosnia and Croatia have suffered enough. You can help them recover.

From me to you and your child

Inside each box packed by volunteers at Feed the Children's aid supply centre in Reading, is a message from the person who made it possible. For the exhausted, often traumatised women who receive it, it is a potent sign that someone, anywhere, is thinking of her, and her efforts to protect her child.

"It's like a voice breaking through the isolation and hopelessness surrounding these mothers and children, saying, 'we know how hard it is for

you, we care what happens to you," explains Gaynor Jones, Volunteer Co-ordinator at Feed the Children. "They take it very personally."

So do the individuals who take up Feed the Children's invitation to send a message along with their £30 donation.

"I wanted to send some love with all the practical things in a baby box."

"Seeing those mothers in Bosnia on the television, clinging to their children for dear life in appalling conditions, I wanted to do more than send a 'donation'," says Karin Westhorp, who has sent a baby box. "I wanted to send a message. I wanted to say to the mother opening the box, 'You're doing an amazing job, and my family think about you every night'. Feed the Children enabled me to do that, for which I'm very grateful."

Julie Griffin was drawn to the idea of sending a baby box to Bosnia for the same reason. "I just wanted to send some love with all the practical things in a baby box. It was that personal involvement which really appealed to me."



Despite the Dayton peace initiative, mothers and young children in Bosnia trying to rebuild their lives need even the most basic essentials to succeed.

It costs £30 to send a baby box to a Bosnian mother and baby. If you would like to send one or more, please call 0990 600610 or complete and return the coupon below.

If you would also like to send a message to a Bosnian mother, please enclose it with your donation and Feed the Children will put it inside your baby box.

Call 0990 600610 now to tell us how many baby boxes you would like to send. OR please complete and return this form.

Please send _____ baby boxes at £30 each on my behalf.

I enclose a cheque for £ _____ (total amount) made payable to Feed the Children.

OR Please debit £ _____ from my ☐ Visa ☐ Access ☐ Switch

Card number Last three digits of Switch card no. Switch issue no.

Expiry date Signature

Name (caps) Address

Postcode Telephone

If you would like to send a message to a Bosnian mother, please send it with this form and we will put it in your baby box. Please send to: Feed the Children, Dept 422, FREEPOST, Reading RG1 1BR.

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- feeding cup with lid
- feeding bowl
- 2 spoons

IN BRIEF

Police cultists murdered 14 soul mates

Grenoble — Autopsies have found that 14 of the 16 members of the Order of the Solar Temple Swiss cult found in a remote forest clearing in eastern France were killed by rifle shots, said Jean-François Loras, a French prosecutor. The 14 probably were killed by two cult members who were police officers, who appeared to have then killed themselves after dousing the bodies in paint thinner and setting them alight. *Reuters*

Robbers kill guard in rocket attack

Lille — Hooded gangsters attacked a Brink's armoured car with a rocket launcher and assault rifles, killing one of the escorts and escaping with an unknown amount of money. The 10-man gang used a roadblock to stop the armoured car near Lille airport in northern France. Police said the armoured car had been picking up money from supermarkets in the region. *AP*

Malaysian premier accuses West of unrest

Kuala Lumpur — In one of his frequent swipes at the West, the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamed, accused Western nations of trying to stall Asian development by stirring up labour unrest. "They try to incite workers not to work unless they are paid higher wages to ensure that Asian products become less competitive and the workers lose their jobs." *AP*

Store chiefs jailed after 500 die

Seoul — The owner of Seoul's Sampoong department store which collapsed in June, killing more than 500 people, was sentenced to ten and a half years in jail. Lee Joon, 73, was found guilty of criminal negligence. His son, the store's president, was sentenced to seven years. *Reuters*

Yeltsin stands by his foreign minister

Moscow — President Boris Yeltsin asked his Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, to remain in his job, brushing away demands for his dismissal by Communists and hardliners who won parliamentary elections 10 days ago. Elected to parliament on 17 December, Mr Kozyrev has to choose between resigning from the cabinet or giving up his legislative seat. *AP*

INDEPENDENT

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international

Israel's border war: Civilians pay the price when the unwritten rules of the conflict are broken and the bombs fall on villages

Hizbollah raises stakes in Lebanon fighting

ROBERT FISK

Tyre

"My congratulations to our martyrs," Hassan Nasrallah told a memorial service for one of his Hizbollah militants this month. But the humanitarian worker tramping the stony foothills near Baaloua found a Hizbollah gunman far beyond congratulation. "He'd been killed by an Israeli shell and we had been told where to find him - both sides agreed we could retrieve the corpse," he said.

"He'd been dead two weeks and when we turned him over there were worms all over his face, all over his Kalashnikov. He was decaying but he was still clutching the rifle. I just put him and the rifle in a big plastic sheet together. I guess they buried him with his gun. That's the war in southern Lebanon."

Brutal, nasty and long is not a bad description of the conflict. Israel's occupying army is still assaulted daily by Hizbollah guerrillas and only now, after 5,000 Israeli shells have been fired into the lower Bekaa valley and a flurry of Hizbollah Katyushas landed in Galilee, has the usual threat of "massive military retaliation" died down. The dangers inherent in the latest battles have not gone away, for both sides broke the rules that they agreed last year to reduce the war in southern Lebanon.

It began with a long and unexplained Israeli bombardment of the southern Bekaa. In just over a month, the Israelis fired 5,000 175mm shells into the valleys, in what local UN units

the region believed was little more than target practice. "The Israelis are phasing out their 175mm artillery," one official said. "So this was an opportunity to use up old ammunition. But there are ordinary people in the lower Bekaa and if you're going to use the land they live on as target practice, you're going to get hit back."

Under the unwritten rules between Israelis and Hizbollah, the conflict must be confined to military targets inside southern Lebanon. If the Israelis fire into villages and kill civilians, the Hizbollah will fire Katyushas into Israel. The Israeli bombardment fell outside the terms of the agreement since it did not specifically target villages. But the Hizbollah became worried, not least when Israeli shells fell close to the village of Brachit.

"The Israelis were trying to push at us by avoiding the agreement," a bearded Hizbollah factotum said in Beirut. "They tried to lay down a curtain of fire in the Bekaa to prevent our fighters getting through to attack their army, but they failed. When their shells fell near Brachit, we believed it was time to strike back."

On 27 November, more than two dozen Katyusha rockets were fired into Galilee. A day later, said Harb, the local Hizbollah leader in the village of Jibchit, just north of the occupation zone, stepped into his hooby-trapped car and was blown to pieces. The Hizbollah blamed the Israelis and fired Katyushas across the border. Harb's own story is a revealing one, and apparently involves the Israeli northern army commander, Amiram Levine.



Watching his flock: A shepherd leading sheep past an upturned UN vehicle in the village of Hanniyah, in southern Lebanon

Photograph: AP

ing one, and apparently involves the Israeli northern army commander, Amiram Levine. For on 17 September, General Levine and Moshe Shahal, the Israeli Interior Minister, along with the Israeli army's liaison officer in southern Lebanon, Giora Inbar, were almost killed by the Hizbollah who set off a roadside bomb beside their convoy on the road between

Kleiva and Marjayoun. Harb is said to have planned the attack. "We are not impressed by Levine," said a Hizbollah man. "We know all about him - we almost got him in September: our bomb was only 30ft away from him". Witnesses say the bomb exploded 90 feet from the Israeli army commander.

"How were we supposed to react when the Israelis fired all

these shells? Only a week earlier the Israelis bombed Palestinian 'General Command' positions at Nahame, south of Beirut, but the 'GC' had not carried out any recent operations against the Israelis. This was just provocation."

According to the Israelis, the US envoy, Dennis Ross, was forced to read the riot act to the Syrian ambassador, Walid Mou-

allem: order the Hizbollah to stop or the Israelis will strike into Lebanon "in a devastating way".

Local security sources remain unimpressed. "The Israelis don't have the stomach for another major operation in Lebanon," one of them said. Oddly, however, the Hizbollah appear to have questioned their own response to Israeli attacks. In his speech at the Beirut

memorial ceremony to honour Hizbollah "martyr" Neameh Hassayayeh, Hassan Nasrallah said: "Perhaps our retaliation, with 30 rockets or so, was a bit over the limit compared to other times. But the important thing was to wake up the world and this we succeeded in doing. We are told that the US was unhappy with our retaliation... a few Jewish settlers were hurt."

some holes were made in their roofs and they had to spend all that time in their shelters. Breaks my heart! A few Katyushas fall in Israel and the whole world suffers a nervous breakdown. But what about our people in Brachit, Hadatha, Shama and scores of others... don't they count?"

Mr Nasrallah had another message for his guerrillas. "Let me tell you about the trap Israel is setting up. They want our resistance to stop for six months and the Lebanese army to disarm the resistance as a prelude to withdrawal. Then they make this nonsense sound like a new peace proposal. And many, including some in this place [Lebanon], actually believe them."

In fact, Israel only offered to "talk" about withdrawal if there was a six-month ceasefire, hardly an offer that would commend itself to President Hafez al-Assad of Syria whose control of Lebanon is near-total. The Hizbollah's war is painful enough for the Israeli army, and the Syrians are unlikely to worry about Israeli casualties unless Israel stages a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, has proclaimed a "peace revolution". But if the Israelis are still looking for partial withdrawal on Golan, Mr Assad is not going to be impressed, the war will continue and that lonely humanitarian worker is going to be wrapping many more corpses in plastic sheets, with or without the posthumous congratulations of their former leader.

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Israel to free prisoners as Syria talks resume

ERIC SILVER
Jerusalem

Israel yesterday completed its withdrawal from the six West Bank cities due to be handed over to Yasser Arafat's National Authority before next month's Palestinian elections. The last and most contentious major centre, Hebron, will follow in March.

A first detachment of Palestinian police took control of Ramallah, the home town of Mr Arafat's wife, Suha. Some 18 miles north of Jerusalem, Ramallah is expected to join Gaza City as the Palestinians' interim capital, though the long-term goal is still to establish a permanent capital in Jerusalem.

Young Palestinians sped the last Israeli police jeep out of Ramallah with a barrage of stones, firing into the air as the Star of David was lowered from the police station.

The Israeli army announced yesterday that it had completed a list of 1,000 Palestinian security prisoners (of the 5,000 it is still holding) who will be released next week. The Prime

Minister, Shimon Peres, has agreed also to a request from Mr Arafat to expand the legislative council to be elected on 20 January from 82 to 89 members. However, much Israel may deny it, the council looks more and more like the parliament of a state in the making.

An ominous sign of the kind of state it might be was given on Monday, when Palestinian police arrested the duty editor of al-Quds, the largest-circulation Palestinian daily paper, Maher al-Alami was taken from his Jerusalem home to the West Bank police headquarters in Jericho. His offence was to relegate to an inside page a story lauding Mr Arafat's relations with the Christian world.

Peace talks between Israel and Syria resumed outside Washington yesterday. The Israelis are looking less for an immediate breakthrough than for an indication of the kind of peace President Hafez al-Assad has in mind.

Mr Peres, who was always more optimistic and less patient than his assassinated predecessor, Yitzhak Rabin, has been

encouraged by a more conciliatory tone from Damascus. "It is not peace yet," he told an audience of Israel's Arab citizens on Monday, "but the tone sets the music."

"We have never had better music than we have now." Israel has signalled its readiness to evacuate most of the Golan Heights if occupied in 1967, but only in return for "full peace", including diplomatic relations and open borders. The army is arguing against taking the risk of coming down from the strategic plateau for anything less.

The Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Amos Shabak, explained to the parliamentary foreign affairs and defence committee on Monday: "When it is necessary to fight, there is great importance to territory. There is a big difference between attaching the fight from the Hula Valley (in northern Israel) or from Kuneitra (on the Golan). When we are talking about peace, we need to know which peace and what are its characteristics."

Leading article, page 12

MORTGAGES

NOTICE OF INTEREST RATE VARIATION

The following interest rates for mortgages provided by Centrebank, a Division of Bank of Scotland, will apply with effect from 21 December 1995 for loans not yet drawn and from 1 February 1996 for existing borrowers.

Centrebank Mortgage Rate	7.49% per annum
Stabilised Charging rate	7.79% per annum
Adaptable Mortgage Plan Charging Rate	7.65% per annum
Home Loan Rate	7.49% per annum
Centrebank Mortgage Rate Plus (Variable)	7.99% per annum

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the sales

Shoppers stampede to cash in on bargains

LOUISE JURY

Sales fever gripped all of Britain not already in the grip of bad weather yesterday as the much vaunted consumer confidence comeback finally made a showing.

Stores across the country reported queues of customers, as the cold did little to deter bargain-hunters who seemed set on good value for money.

A spokeswoman for Selfridge's of London said: "This year we are seeing a more discerning customer. They are looking for better quality merchandise rather than cheap sale bargains."

About 800 customers queued six-deep for the start of the Selfridge's sale where bargains included a £1,599 Chinese wool hand-knotted rug with 75 per cent off at £399. It sold within minutes of doors opening. More than 850 pairs of designer shoes were snapped up in the first two hours while the Men's Designer Room sold 1,000 suits, 2,000 shirts, 1,000 pieces of underwear and 200 overcoats in the same period.

Lesley Exley, marketing director, said: "It's going brilliantly. We've got a lot of people going down to china and glassware as normal but it is menswear which is completely and utterly chocks, with the designer brands attracting attention. British men seem to be becoming more interested in style."

Pat Phillips, 61, from Bushey, Hertfordshire, was trying to persuade her husband that three buttons instead of his normal two on a jacket would not be too radical a move. "It's frantic here," she said. "This is definitely busier than normal and people are buying. You couldn't get in the car park."

Laboratory supervisor Keith Woolley, 35, was taking all the fashion experts' advice and stocking up on essentials like good shirts. He found four before being sidetracked to the Calvin Klein and Armani ties, reduced from £54.95 to £34.95.

"You feel good if you can get things with a few pounds off," he said.

Judith Strange, 29, a sales trainer from Dorking, Surrey, thought the reductions were not quite as good as in previous years "but we're still buying them".

Elsewhere in Oxford Street, the normal decorum of Marks and Spencer and Debenhams was shattered by the shoppers' scrum.

Gurm Lal, manager of Dixons, said all departments were busy but the real bargains lay in discounts such as £150 off large-screen televisions. "Most of the money at this time of year goes on large audio and hi-fi items," he said.

At the MetroCentre, Tyne-side, Europe's biggest shopping complex, queues began more than two hours before opening time and management opened up early to let shoppers in from the cold.

In the Barker and Stonehouse store in Newcastle upon Tyne, brothers John and David Fowler bought a £2,245 sofa for £99 after waiting since Christmas Day in temperatures as low as -7C.

The Meadowhall shopping centre in Sheffield was "absolutely buzzing", a spokesman said. "At Next, they're letting a few people out before they let a few people in. If you look at the malls, the shopping bag factor is very high. The bargain hunters are here in their hundreds."

A spokesman for the Merry Hill shopping centre in Dudley, West Midlands, said: "This looks like the best ever start to the sales. I don't think I have ever seen so many people in the centre. A lot of the shops didn't open until 10am today but people were outside knocking on the doors at 8am."

He added: "If the retailers can convert the number of people coming to the centre into sales - which from what I've seen they are doing - then it should be a good start to the new year."



Business as usual: Selfridge's china department is always busy, but this year designer clothes saw the heaviest flow of shoppers

Photograph: Dillon Bryden

New year financial blues set to hit big spenders

At least a quarter of the population will start 1996 further in debt after funding their Christmas and new year festivities, according to a new survey.

And more than half of consumers plan to compound the cost of their pre-Christmas shopping spree by going to the January sales, the research for consumer-credit supplier Beneficial Bank discovered.

The vast majority of people say they do not get into financial trouble after Christmas. The numbers admitting to problems are higher among 25- to 34-year-olds, people who work and live in the south, and those earning more than

£25,000 - although this may be due to their running up higher credit card bills rather than being unable to meet debts.

But Bernie Woollard, the bank's marketing controller, said that many of these people overstretch existing credit facilities such as overdrafts without meaning to - causing unnecessary additional costs.

"Many will go into debt 'accidentally'," he said. "Consumers are not planning their finances sufficiently ahead and may well pay more than they need to."

Without forward planning, consumers may well find themselves paying off the festivities throughout 1996 and beyond.

Younger spenders, in the 25- to 34 age group, were the most worrying, he said. A third predicted they would be pushing the boat out with their credit card over Christmas and 69 per cent expected to go to the sales, but 11 per cent thought this would put them further in debt.

As a result, a quarter of those surveyed thought they would start the new year depressed.

To help tackle the new-year financial blues, Beneficial Bank is launching a service called Money Planner - a loan planning service to enable customers to consolidate credit into one monthly repayment.



Out in force: the bargain hunters Photograph: Glynn Griffiths



Sales floor: The excitement seems lost on younger shoppers Photograph: Dillon Bryden

SALES GUIDE: WHERE TO FIND WHAT AND WHEN

- START TODAY**
DEPARTMENT STORES
Fenwick
Sale at the large Newcastle branch begins.
Fortnum & Mason
181 Piccadilly, London W1 (0171-734 8040). 50 per cent off Betty Jackson, selected lines. Selected men's suits £245, save £250. Chateau Lynch Baroque. Some Cru Pauliac £150, save £100.
John Lewis Partnership
278-306 Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-629 7711). Peter Jones, Sloane Square, and at John Lewis, Brent Cross, Brixton, Newcastle, Cheshire, High Wycombe, Aberdeen and Edinburgh. Will last 10 days. Sale starts tomorrow at all other branches.
CLOTHES
Space NK
11am start. 41 Thomas Neal's, Earlham Street, London WC2 (0171-379 7030). Between 30 and 40 per cent off designer labels and accessories, including Clements Ribeiro, Future Ozark, Alberto Biani, Soap Studio, Liza Bruce and Fenn Wright & Manson.
HOMES & INTERIORS
Crucial Trading
77 Westbourne Park Road, London W2 (0171-221 9000). And 4 St Barnabas Street, Finsbury Green, London, SW1 (0171-221 9000). Until 28 February, 50 per cent reduction on certain floor coverings.
Miscellaneous
Crossways, Church, Farnham, Surrey (01438 714014). Until 13 January. Sells deco-
- native bathroom and kitchen objects. Some massive discounts, including complete marble bathroom suites reduced from £2,500 to £800.
MISCELLANEOUS
The Pukka Palace
174 Tower Bridge Road, London SE1 (0171-234 0000). Until 28 January, 20 per cent off Anglo-Indian furniture and accessories, such as leather safari suitcases and solar tops.
NOW RUNNING
DEPARTMENT STORES
Debenhams
Branches throughout England and Wales. 334-348 Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-580 3000). General information (0171-408 3333). Will last for about two weeks.
Fenwick
63 New Bond Street, London W1 (0171-629 9161) and stores in Brent Cross, Windsor, Leicester, York, Canterbury and Tunbridge Wells. At Bond Street, Mondri collections will be reduced by 30-50 per cent. Fenn Wright & Manson, Betty Barclay collections by up to 50 per cent, and Weekend Collections by 30 per cent. Reductions at Brent Cross include up to 50 per cent off French Connection, Jacques Vert and Bianca, and 50 per cent off leather handbags and selected jewellery by Monet, Ciro and Napier. (Newcastle sale starts tomorrow)
Harvey Nichols
109-125 Knightsbridge, London SW1 (0171-235 5000). Will last two to three weeks. Account customers get an additional 10 per cent off the sale price for the first four

days. Specific bargains are a secret, but expect reductions to be up to 50 per cent off selected items.
House of Fraser
(England and Wales). For store sites, ring 0171-963 2236. Bargains in the cookshop include 40 per cent off Le Creuset cast-iron cookware in American green and burgundy and 50 per cent off Judge satin stainless steel cookware.
Liberty
Regent Street, London W1 (0171-734 1234) and branches nationwide. Join the hordes sniffing out fabric bargains such as printed Armani silk down from £89.95 to £25. Liberty printed silk from £14.95 to £10 and Liberty Veruna wool from £22 to £15. Jean Paul Gaultier jewellery is half price. Pewter-framed mirrors are down from £59 to £29. Portuguese double bed spreads £49, save £50 and Liberty wax coats £99, save £100.
Marks & Spencer
Customer inquiries (0171-935 4422). End-of-season clearance nationwide.
Selfridges
Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-629 1234). Will last about a month. Armchair browsers can check out sale bargains in Selfridges Selection mail order catalogue, available now (0800 101101).
CLOTHES
Aquascutum
100 Regent Street, London W1 (0171-734 6090). Reductions of between 50 and 75 per cent on selected items. Womenswear: jackets £162, save £163, coats £275, save £175. Menswear: raincoats £150, save £175, blazers £195, save £100.

Austin Reed
Regent Street, London W1 (0171-734 6789) and nationwide. Will last two to three weeks. Account customers can take advantage of an extra 5 per cent discount on the first three days.
Christian Lacroix
8a Sloane Street, London SW1 (0171-235 2400) and 29 Old Bond Street, London W1 (0171-409 1994). Discounts of 30 per cent.
Comme des Garçons
59 Brook Street, London W1 (0171-493 1258). Reductions of up to 40 per cent off all remaining men's and women's collections including Robes de Chambre, Comme des Garçons Tricot and Junya Watanabe.
French Connection
99 Long Acre, London WC2 and branches around the country. General inquiries (0171-580 2507). Between 30 and 50 per cent off selected stock.
Hobbs
Unit 17, The Piazza, Covent Garden, London WC2 (0171-836 9168) and branches nationwide. General customer information 0171-586 5550. Buy your party gear at prices discounted by up to 50 per cent. Strappy silhouettes are reduced from £59.99 to £29.99, ballerina shoes from £28.99 to £19.99, satin cross-over dress from £64.99 to £32.99.
Joseph
77 Fulham Road, London SW3 (0171-823 9500). Reductions from 30 per cent off.
Laura Ashley
Branches nationwide. Inquiries 01686 622116. Between 20 and 50 per cent off selected items.

Monsoon
Inquiries 0181 601 4000. Knee-length mohair coats now £99, save £71. Evening velvet frock coat £110, save £40. Sutton Jacquard cardigans £29.27, save £30.
Racing Green
193 Regent Street, London W1 (0171-437 4300). 33 King Street, Manchester (0161-835 2022). Unit F1, Bental Centre, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey (0181-546 2224). A sale catalogue can be obtained on 0343 331177. Most sports jackets are now £50, with a maximum saving of £85. All shirts in the sale are £20, save £15.
The Scotch House
2 Brompton Road, Knightsbridge, London SW1, 84-86 Regent Street, London W1, and 64 Buchanan Street, Glasgow. Inquiries on 0171-581 2151. Reductions of between 30 and 40 per cent.
Shop
Basement, 4 Brewer Street, London W1 (0171 437 1259). Until the end of January, 30-50 per cent off Hysterie Glamour (the Japanese answer to "really cool" T-shirts), Judy Blame and Gimme 5.
SHOES
Church's
Branches nationwide. Central inquiry number is 01323 649408. Some styles reduced by more than 50 per cent. Church Bellini men's shoes down from £199 to £99, ladies' lily-style high-heeled boots reduced from £120 to £60.
Jones Bootmakers
Branches throughout the country. Inquiry number is 01323 649408.
Pied à terre

32 Neal Street, London WC2 (0171 240 8148) and branches nationwide. Reductions include court shoes reduced from £79 to £40, pumps £65 to £30 and long boots from £95 to £50.
Ravel
Only at 184-188 Oxford Street, London W1. Sale starts at other branches this weekend. Mail order and inquiries on 0171-631 0224. Up to 33 per cent off this season's boots, bags and stiletto-heeled shoes.
Red or Dead
1 & 23 Thomas Neal's, Earlham Street, London WC2 (0171 240 5576) and branches nationwide. Inquiries 0171-937 3137. Will last about a month. Selected stock reduced by 50 per cent. Sixties-style knee-length nylon boots in gold, black or rust reduced from £120 to £60.
Small and Tall Shoe Shop
Inquiries (0171 723 5321). Until 6 January. Sale of women's shoes in large or small sizes.
HOMES & INTERIORS
The General Trading Co.
10 Argyle Street, Bath (01225-461307) and 2-4 Dyer Street, Cirencester (01285-652314). Until the end of January, Save up to 30 per cent on this clear-out. Quilted cotton bedspreads down from £180 to £135 and Kilim stools from £640 to £500.
Heal's
196 Tottenham Court Road, London W1 (0171-636 1666). 234 King's Road and Tinsgate, Guildford. Look for greatly reduced one-off pieces of furniture that are either shop-soiled, damaged or buyers' samples, along with little lux-

uries like a Heal's hand-made Avon bed (5ft) reduced from £2,495 to £1,870.
Ikea
2 Drury Way, North Circular Road, London NW10 (0181-208 5600) and branches in Croydon, Birmingham, Gateshead, Leeds and Warrington. Up to 50 per cent savings throughout the store including black leather three-seat sofa from £35 to £29, Kvilla two-seater sofa now £199, save £96 and Spisa table £129, save £60.
Purves & Purves
80-81 and 83 Tottenham Court Road, London W1 (0171-580 8223). Up to 40 per cent off ex-display and discontinued lines. Special orders will be reduced by 10 per cent on items over £500.
Rhode Design
63 Cross Street, London N1 (0171-354 9933). 10 per cent off all ranges of mdf kitchen furniture.
MISCELLANEOUS
The Body Shop
First nationwide sale. Until 13 January. Customer services (01903-751500).
Buyers & Sellers
120-122 Ladbroke Grove, London W10 (0171-229 1947). Dial-a-bargain sale of domestic appliances runs from 27 December until 31 January. The idea is that you name the item - brand, model number and ring up for a sale price quotation.
Currys
Inquiries 0181 419 3900. Toshiba fastest 21 inch television £259.99, save £70. Candy 1000 Spin-Autowasher £249.99, save £100. Frigidaire two-door

fridge freezer £299.99, save £170.
Dixons
Inquiries 0181 419 3900. Sony Camcorder now £699, save £300. Matsui CDP200 remote control CD player £79.99, half price and Grundig 21-inch Nicam TV £299, save £100.
Olympus
301 Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-409 2619) and at stores nationwide. Discounted goods include the Kastle bike Degree 3.5 - was £299.99, now £240. Nike ladies' air total body trainers are down from £59.99 to £44.99. Nikes Air-macs £60, save £40. Hippo Beast golf set (irons) £299, save £100.
The Pier
At stores around the country. Until 21 January. Customer inquiries (0171-351 7100). Christmas merchandise is reduced to clear. Other merchandise at half price or less.

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education

Some will enter the new year with enthusiasm, others with foreboding. Three teachers talk about work and morale

Who'd be a state school teacher?

Retired, hurt, from a career that had changed beyond recognition

When Paul Lockey went into teaching in 1980, it was all he ever wanted. "I loved the job, and the kids," he says. Yet for much of this year, after retiring at 45, he has been at home recovering from stress.

Paul was originally a pop musician, playing with - among other bands - the Foundations. But after marriage and a daughter, he went back to college. "I always wanted to teach," he says. "I saw it as a noble, satisfying job which helped the world." Once qualified, he got a job at Charlemont Primary School in Sandwell, "a lovely school in a nice area with a good reputation. It was heaven."

He went in to work at 8am, and after the children left he would willingly stay on until 6pm. "It was as quiet as a church then, and I would sit, reflecting on that day and preparing for the next, thinking of new ways to make it fun. Paul was happy, his head-teacher was happy and the wit and camaraderie of the staff-room was a daily delight."

That halcyon time lasted three years - and then the first national curriculum document landed on his desk. By now Paul was in charge of maths at Charlemont and, in a dozen staff meetings, he conscientiously planned the required changes, meanwhile taking a six-week course for maths co-ordinators.

Then he was put in charge of science, just as the national curriculum science document came through. The round of

meetings started again and he began a two-year diploma in primary science. But as Paul qualified, the Government changed the curriculum again: "My diploma was worthless. I was absolutely devastated."

New national curriculum documents - around a dozen in all - kept arriving. There were endless meetings: "I felt that even if I worked till midnight every night the work wouldn't get done."

He had lost those precious hours at the end of the day: "Invariably there would be a meeting, then it was: quick! Back to the classroom. It's dark, I'm starving. I can do half an hour's preparation, take the documents home, eat to survive and then plough on. I was running on an adrenalin high."

But it wasn't the workload that bothered Paul. "I expected to give my all." It was the sense of futility that was getting him down. "I thought: everything will change and we'll have to start the whole process again."

Nightmarishly, the dreaded paperwork seemed to have taken control. And he hated the sense of being driven, of having to fit things in. Worse, he felt as if the Government was taking revenge on teachers for past strike action.

One night, after hours spent ticking thousands of little boxes (the latest attainment targets), he could no longer move his hand. "I thought if I threw it all in the bin, or made it up, no one would know - because no one ever wanted to see it."



Paul Lockey, who retired at 45 because of stress: "We spent years doing what we thought was important - yet it was all as nothing to the people in power, who just changed it."

In the staff-room, often deserted now, there was no more laughter. "We were piled high with work and morale was very low." Paul had begun to feel physically weak, aching all over as if with flu. It was only later that a psychiatrist

explained these were symptoms of stress.

Then one evening in the classroom, as he forced himself to tackle yet more paperwork, Paul was suddenly unable to stand. Palpitations and breathlessness hit him "like a bombshell." "I

thought, oh God, I'm dying of a heart attack." In fact it was the first of many panic attacks which - over a period of a year - were to make it impossible for him to carry on teaching.

As the vicious circle of illness and mounting work made it

increasingly difficult to keep up, Paul was sent on six months' sick leave for his "anxiety state". A further six months on half pay followed, and then early retirement in July of last year.

"The teaching I loved had

become the job I hated," says Paul. "It was a hammer blow to me." He has started feeling better recently and is now teaching for half a day a week. But he is still "bopping mad" that teaching became a "political football".

"We wasted years doing what we thought was important - yet it was all as nothing to the people in power, who just changed it. I know now that I am only one of many thousands of teachers who have become ill with stress."

Simple things in the private sector made a big difference. Like having textbooks

"You'll never get back into the state system," warned a colleague. It was a bit like telling the birdman he would never return to Alcatraz.

A parent of the public school to which I had just been appointed supplied yet more unsolicited advice. "When you get there, your feet won't touch the ground," he laughed, obviously unaware that levitation among comprehensive school teachers is something of an art form.

Armed with these warnings and 16 years' experience in state schools, I embarked on a new career in the private sector last September.

Primarily, my application was inspired by the need for a new challenge. At interview, though, I could not entirely conceal the wish to escape funding cuts, increased class sizes, government initiatives and curricular changes, on top of which loomed the imminent threat of an Ofsted inspection. I was, without doubt, selling out, but at what price?

The first few weeks were a honeymoon. Although the facilities at my new school are overwhelming, it was the simple things that made the biggest impression. Like having textbooks, for example. A room of my own was a novelty, too. Perhaps the most pleasant relief was to begin teaching at 9am without having to go through the ritual staff briefing followed by morning registration.

Registration in my comprehensive was more than just roll-calling. It involved a battle for silence while reading the bulletin; receiving or insisting upon absence notes (usually the latter); following up disciplinary issues; collecting photograph money, trip money, mibus appeal money, and promoting the car boot sale in aid of the science-block roof.

Supervising the swift removal of unacceptable rings, ear-rings and nose-rings was followed by inquiries as to the dietary habits of those who insisted they were eating sherbet dais for want of breakfast; by which time the class would be clomping for the doors in order to sit next to their friend during the obligatory John Patten-inspired "act of worship". Half an hour into the

day and blood pressure was already summing ominously.

Whatever else may have been said by supposedly informed opinion, everyone knows - except, it appears, Ofsted inspectors and Ofsted-educators members of the Cabinet - that class size is the single most important advantage to the public school. Not simply because one can more readily deal with the individual needs of each pupil, but smaller classes mean more manageable rooms: a more intimate approach, less opportunity for distraction and a more positive teacher-pupil relationship. It also means less marking and therefore less rushed and less meaningless marking.

When I casually remarked to a colleague that I was enjoying the smaller class sizes, he retorted with: "Yes, but wait until end-of-term reports." For weeks I contemplated what kind of encyclopaedic profiling was about to be required, and was relieved to discover the report forms were exactly the same as those I had previously used. There was, however, one essential difference: I now teach 30 pupils per week. Previously I had reports to write for more than 200.

The old snowstorm of paper was unrelenting. A day or two off would mean returning to a pigeonhole tightly packed with paper. I now boast a pigeon-hole empty for sometimes four consecutive days.

Paperwork is about accountability, not standards. The public school is accountable to its customers, which in many ways mitigates the need for continual self-justification. Standards are assumed to be high unless proved otherwise. Comprehensive schools, however, from government and press perspectives, are assumed to be underachieving unless they can prove to the contrary.

The job is demanding. My new school is coeducational and non-selective. A large number of dyslexic pupils attend as well as those for whom English is a second language. In fact, given classes of 30, a budget reduction of several millions and a great deal of government intervention, it could almost be a comprehensive.

MARTIN DIMERY

I still love my job. Must there be something wrong with me?

Marion Plowright is a teacher who wholeheartedly loves teaching, has never regretted doing it or thought of leaving the profession. It is a sign of the times that this makes her somehow peculiar.

"People say, you're the only person I know who still enjoys teaching. But how many teachers have they spoken to? The implication is that if you enjoy teaching there must be something wrong with you."

Marion has been teaching for 22 years, apart from a six-year maternity break. She is now head of drama and of personal and social education at Central Lancaster High School, a town comprehensive competing locally with two opted-out grammar schools.

"There is a complete misconception that teaching here must be very difficult," she says. "But there is tremendous diversity, which makes it exciting. I work with bright, happy kids who love drama."

Some, it is true, have low aspirations and little self-confidence. "They are the ones I love teaching the most," she says, "because drama builds their confidence and opens their imaginations. You should see their faces when we do a production. They come off stage after a performance and they hug me; they cry. I think I must be one of the luckiest people."

Recently she overheard some pupils saying, "Oh, great! It's drama next," and she was delighted because she likes and respects young people. "I love the 11 to 16 age group and the froth of life they create." They have more to cope with - divorced parents, uncertain job prospects - than her generation ever did.

"I believe in their right to education and that I can make a difference, preparing them for adult life, sparking their imaginations, encouraging self-confidence and empathy. And they devour everything I give them."

Then she is laughing and protesting in case she sounds pompous or smug. But she feels she is a "born teacher", so why not say so? She aims to deliver "high-quality communication and lots of praise". She tries to avoid sarcasm and to avoid indulging her power. All this and she is closeted with 20 or more teenagers at a time for some eight hours a day.

"I do get very tired," she admits. "Sometimes I wonder - can I work at this pace for the next 15 years or will it kill me?" Chronic money shortages at school add to the pressure as "free periods" (non-contact time) get swallowed up



Marion Plowright, head of drama at Central Lancaster High School: "I love the 11 to 16 age group and the froth of life they create."

covering for absent colleagues. "We work through lunch and often after school. There is no time to draw breath or deal with admin." As for Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) checks, despite being specially commended in a recent visit, she finds them "every bit as stressful as expected".

More than anything, it is the low status of teaching today that makes her angry. "The climate of education is now extraordinarily difficult. It's such hypocrisy to say that raising standards is important and then go teacher-bashing."

Teaching does take up "large areas" of her life. "But if you are doing something you feel is worthwhile, why should you feel bad about that?" She could do with more "unwinding time" at the end of the day, however. Sometimes when she gets home to her own children (Joseph, 13, and Laura, 16), her patience has worn thin. If they are demanding, she can snap at them: "And then I hate myself." Yet being

a teacher, she believes, has helped her to communicate as a mother, and vice versa.

Fortunately, her husband, Tony, a university lecturer, shares her passion for drama and their social life revolves

around the theatre. Last year he directed an amateur production of *The Crucible* with Marion in the role of Elizabeth Proctor. Performance is in her family. One sister, Rosalind Plowright, is an internationally

famous opera singer. Another, Louise, played Julie (the hairdresser) in *EastEnders*. "I have thought - I could do that," admits Marion, "but no more than that. Teaching for me is a positive choice."

Interviewed by STEVE MCCONVILLE

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THE KINGDOM

Lars von Trier (no cert)

After four and a half riveting hours, Lars von Trier's *The Kingdom* ends with the three most maddening words in narrative art. By that point, the viewer has grown first accustomed, then addicted to his sophisticated plotting and his sophisticated, but those three little words will spoil quite a few people's evenings. There will be nothing in selected art cinemas.

The Kingdom isn't strictly speaking a film, but a four-part series made for Danish television. The director, who co-wrote the script, refers to it as a "television project" written in a way that's new format. Von Trier didn't have the luxury of long preparation (he claims the script was written in six weeks), and gave up his preferred working method of storyboarding every sequence. The result was that the editing stage became a further part of the creative process, rather than the implementation of decisions already made.

Von Trier boasts jovially about having "sold out", but *The Kingdom*'s mixture of art and commerce is cunning enough to show that he's bluffing. There are even two opening sequences, one highly aesthetic, and the other dynamic. The first is a stunning tableau of the Copenhagen bogs where bleachers used to do their work. It's in slow motion, and bathed in ivory light - light that has itself been softly bleached. Then there's a made-for-TV title sequence, all pounding music and jumpy cutting, speeding ambulances and multiple images of the main characters.

The director claims to have been inspired by a TV series from his childhood (*Belphégor*), and also by *Twin Peaks*, which brought out in David Lynch, in Von Trier's judgement, qualities missing from his movies. Some of *The Kingdom* in fact looks like *ER* - since this is a hospital drama of sorts - or *Homicide*, whose jarring editing it imitates. If you hated the jerkiness there, you won't be soothed here either, but there are rewards in store for the patient.

The arty opening sequence, incorporated a stern voice-over, describing the assumptions of those who built the great hospital called "The Kingdom" on the site of the old bleaching ponds. Perhaps their arrogance became too pronounced, and their persistent denial of the spiritual. "You wouldn't get that line of thinking on *ER*, would you? But the plot certainly follows up this early declaration by putting pressure on the two characters who pay more than lip service to rationalism.

One of these is Helmer, Ernst-Hugo Järegård, the amirho of the piece, a Swedish surgeon whose human skills leave much to be desired. He's brusque and obsessed with the correct procedures: he makes



All stitched up - well, nearly

It's a made-for-TV film with artistic credentials, a weird cast of characters - and it's four and a half hours long. By Adam Mars-Jones

no secret of his contempt for little Denmark and sloppy Danes. What he does keep secret is that he was responsible for a child's brain damage in the course of an operation. There is nothing remotely likeable about Helmer, but the way that the plot keeps throwing his way precisely the sort of situation he can't handle, makes him a stubbornly sympathetic monster. He has a boss who tries to jazz up morning conference with first names (Helmer's first name is Sög) and singing. He joins a sort of hospital freemasonry - "The Sons of the Morning" - who will look after his interests, but at a terrible cost in humiliation. He has patients who ask to be hypnotised because of their allergies to anaesthesia, and who hum loudly while he operates on them.

The other devotee of reason is a pathologist whose speciality (a rare sort of liver cancer) shows up only about once a decade. There's a wonderful specimen in the hospital at the moment, except that new legislation means he needs the relatives' permission - which they won't give - to dissect. There's a legal loophole, but it

leads him into a truly grotesque course of action, which is all the more effective for being underplayed.

Ranged against the rationalists are one pragmatist and one

ologist in love with a tumour, and a black marketeer with a conscience. The quartet of principals is completed by Mrs Drusse (Kirsten Roloffes), a hypochondriac clairvoyant. She

ghost story. The supernatural material is discreetly handled, without overweening effects. In four and a half hours, there is only one *Pollux* shot (phantom hand reaches up through

"The great accomplishment of *The Kingdom* is its blending of black comedy, farce and ghost story"

spiritualist. Hook, a junior doctor who lives in the basement of the hospital, runs a sort of clearing house for the institution's surplus. His definition of recycling is broad, including as it does the precipitating of cocaine from leftover eye medication, which he then sells to the doctors. Hook keeps a little symbolic cemetery, with crosses representing patients damaged by negligence, and trades in knowledge as well as in equipment.

A negligent martinet, a path-

gets herself admitted for a gynaecological complaint, but catches the whiff of a haunting when she hears a girl crying in the lift shaft. Mrs Drusse is the most sympathetic of the characters, a sort of Scandinavian Margaret Rutherford, except in her tyrannising of her poor defeated bear of a son, who just happens to work as a printer in the hospital to which she so regularly seeks admission.

The great accomplishment of *The Kingdom* is its blending of black comedy, farce and

grating to 'grab doll' and one *Ghostbusters* moment (hospital trolley loaded with ghosts passes through visiting dignitary).

So careful is the plot construction that a major farce climax arrives without our noticing the build-up. A government minister is invited by Helmer's awful superior to inspect the hospital, and every-

where his eye falls there are unauthorised operations and impromptu exorcisms going on. If this is a beautiful piece of art construction that doesn't

release the farce emotions (pain experienced as pleasure), then that is only because we know the reasons behind each tableau of misbehaviour, and can no longer view things with a conventional eye.

The only doubts attaching to the project must come from its use of a pair of Down's Syndrome dishwashers as a sort of chorus. Their scenes in the scullery are somehow pastoral, and take place in a filtered ivory light, but it is still unsatisfactory to show Down's Syndrome people as eerie children (they are fully aware of all the ghosts) who have no part in the human world (we only see them interacting with each other). The portrayal of a Haitian member of the hospital staff is also rather splashy - the film seems rather to share Helmer's assumption that anyone from Haiti knows voodoo as a matter of course.

But the only absolutely unsatisfactory thing about *The Kingdom* is that final phrase, coming after such a magnificent stretch of controlled narrative: *To Be Continued...* how long will the waiting be? At the ICA, London, SW1 from Fri 5 Jan (0171-930 3647)

also showing

Weighty matters, light work

HEAVY James Mangold (15)

THE WHITE BALLOON Jafar Panahi (U)



Deborah Harry in *Heavy*: beauty gone to seed

Fed up with Christmas? The week's two new films are not quite calculated to make you forget the horrors of the holiday season. *Heavy*, as the title indicates, is guaranteed to stir deep pangs of guilt in festive bingers: its hero, Victor, a pizza chef at a run-down diner in rural upstate New York, tips the scales at a trim 250lbs. As for the slimming food he is taking, without much enthusiasm, appear at every turn to taunt him. But there's fat chance of his losing weight while his mother, for whom he devotedly fries up a calorific breakfast every morning, is there to boss him around.

Nor will he fulfil his secret dream of going to college to become a proper cook. Repressed, innocent and child-like almost (but not quite) to the point of being retarded, his little world is circumscribed by the café, its hard-bitten waitress and handful of regulars. Then his life is upended by two events - the arrival of a pretty college drop-out as the diner's second waitress, and his mother's sudden death - both of which nudge him slowly, clumsily towards the possibility (nothing more) of self-renewal.

We're somewhere adjacent to Mike Leigh territory here: *Heavy* - which is a comedy - dwells on the poignant humour of struggling, vaguely dissatisfied people failing to connect with each other. It's a film of looks and silences rather than speech, depending less on its almost event-free narrative than on impressionistic moments and the ability to make us care about the characters.

The net result is a shade slow but driven by a performance of great sweetness by Pruitt Taylor Vince as the lovelorn pizza man, and an interesting supporting cast which includes Liv Ullmann as the girl he has a crush on and Deborah Harry and Shelley Long as, respectively, the older waitress and Victor's mother, two alarming manifestations of beauty gone spectacularly to seed.

The White Balloon is like *Heavy*'s two new films are not quite calculated to make you forget the horrors of the holiday season. *Heavy*, as the title indicates, is guaranteed to stir deep pangs of guilt in festive bingers: its hero, Victor, a pizza chef at a run-down diner in rural upstate New York, tips the scales at a trim 250lbs. As for the slimming food he is taking, without much enthusiasm, appear at every turn to taunt him. But there's fat chance of his losing weight while his mother, for whom he devotedly fries up a calorific breakfast every morning, is there to boss him around.

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FILM

WEST END

after outside London

● *THE KINGDOM* (15) Lars von Trier (no cert)

● *HEAVY* (15) James Mangold

● *THE WHITE BALLOON* (U) Jafar Panahi

● *FOUR ROOMS* (15) Robert Rodriguez

● *THE SHIRT* (15) Paul Verhoeven

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FOUNDED 1986

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A tale of two rulers

For many years Syria regarded itself as the redoubt of steadfastness in the Arab world and President Hafez al-Assad, its long-serving ruler, proudly deemed himself the standard-bearer of confrontation with Israel.

But President Assad has discovered that applause from the remaining Arab radicals and the grudging admiration of Islamic fundamentalists provide neither insurance for his regime nor a viable economic future for his people.

That is why he joined the Gulf war against Saddam Hussein of Iraq and then entered the American-sponsored peace negotiations that followed the allied victory of 1991. Four years ago, the Syrian leader was playing the long game for which he is renowned. Many Arabs, detesting the peace talks and regarding their fruits as scant and withered, wish he would play the game to infinity.

But President Assad, spurred on by the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the accession of Shimon Peres, appears to have decided that the moment is at hand for hard dealing. Syrian and Israeli envoys began talks yesterday under a cloak of discretion at a countryside retreat outside Washington. The United States hopes that these surroundings may encourage the same brutal realism as that which gave birth to the accords on the former Yugoslavia reached at Dayton, Ohio.

The chief Syrian negotiator, Walid al-Mualem, is quoted as saying that he arrives intent on defending Syria's fundamental rights. No weary reader of the official Damascus press would expect anything less. Yet President Assad seems to glimpse within his grasp the return of all the Golan Heights occupied by Israel,

a prize that has eluded him since Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy more than two decades past.

There is hardly a stone on the Golan Heights unturned by the military cartographers. The protagonists know the arguments and could recite the possible dispositions of forces in their sleep. They are separated more by concepts than detail. Syria wants a mere land transaction, Israel a state of peace that will ease its harmonious accommodation into the nations and markets of the Middle East. In fact, the two are inseparable in their effect. President Assad and Mr Peres are too wily a pair of old birds, therefore, not to appreciate how fundamental is their next move.

A word here about Mr Peres. He is depicted by the Israeli Right, and by its ill-instructed editorial apologists abroad, as a man so bent on advancement in the pantheon of history that he would betray Israel's security for a quick and easy deal. Such a view neglects his lifetime dedication to the cause of Israeli military and nuclear superiority over its Arab foes. It is also ignorant of modern political reality. For the Israeli Prime Minister may only move at the measure of his cabinet.

Mr Peres has indeed said that he puts peace before his own electoral prospects in 1996. But to carry a deal returning the Golan Heights, he will need to command a broad spectrum of Israeli opinion. He deserves every ounce of support he can find.

As for President Assad, he, too, is walking with destiny, for he no longer has age, health or a smooth succession on his side. Both men must know that at stake is the most crucial political decision in the Middle East since the creation of Israel in 1948.

Backing the British boffin

Consider the word "inventor". What image does it conjure up? Possibly your picture is of a wispy-haired loon, peering over cracked binoculars and gabbling about a deranged scheme for using household sewage to feed the population of Derbyshire. The fictional Professor Branestawm might serve as your model.

But it is more likely that your mind's eye sees a stolid hero, struggling against the odds to have a revolutionary idea recognised for the brilliant innovation that it is. The inventor of the bouncing bomb, Barnes Wallis, might be the prototype. This would reflect the feeling that many Britons have long nurtured about home-grown ideas: that we have the amazing notions, but that it is left to foreigners to develop and profit from them.

This is a view endorsed by a grouping of more than 300 British inventors, the Intellectual Property Development Confederation. They believe that many bright ideas fail to be exploited commercially. Their supporters point out that only about 80 of the 4,000 patents granted each year in Britain are ever manufactured. Big companies are often highly resistant to new inventions. According to one expert, "successful innovations always start as a joke, become a threat and end as being obvious". Many fail to make it at all.

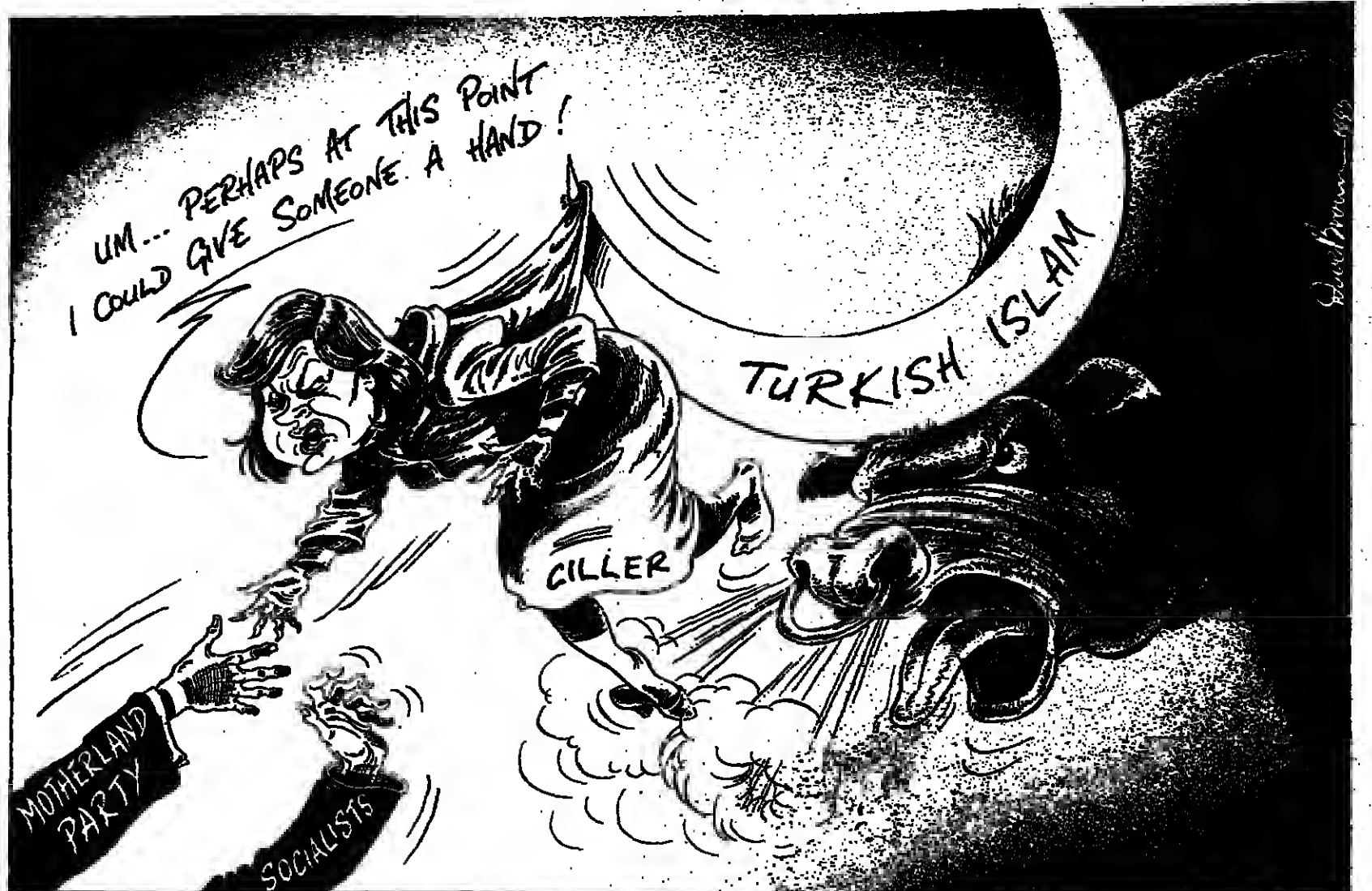
Why is this? Sometimes inventors simply do not know where to go with their ideas, who will be most interested. Even the more enlightened organisations seeking a commercial rate of return are unlikely to lend money to a lone inven-

tor. So inventors need to be put in touch with those companies most open to exploiting their ideas. Even before getting to that stage they will often need facilities to turn their ideas into prototypes.

The inventors' confederation suggests that £4m of National Lottery cash should be matched by commercial sponsorship to create a National Innovation Centre. This would evaluate ideas and generate contacts, and it would run its own laboratories to help produce prototypes. It proposes that such a centre should be based in the East Midlands and linked to Nottingham Trent University.

One of the scheme's early supporters is the British inventor/businessman James Dyson. He invented and developed the bagless vacuum cleaner, was turned down by all the major electrical manufacturers, but persisted and sold it through mail-order catalogues. It was a classic good idea that nearly didn't happen. He believes that there are more Dysons out there, and that an Innovation Centre might help them to succeed.

There is, of course, a risk that money will be wasted by cerebral types on uncommercial ventures. In the absence of a financial imperative, the new centre would need to be given clear criteria to operate by, and it would have to be tough enough to say no to pleading boffins. But we should back Mr Dyson's hunch on this one. After all, a country that can afford a lottery-funded Centre of Sports Excellence really should be able to run a National Innovation Centre.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hidden significance of arms decommissioning

From Mr N. D. Martin-Clark
Sir: It is perhaps no surprise to anyone that talks between the various parties concerned in Northern Ireland should run into an impasse before they even begin, but it may seem odd that the stumbling block should be the apparently minor issue of arms decommissioning. However, as in relationships between individuals, fundamental disagreements come to a head over small things and part of their resolution lies in teasing out the significance of the apparently trivial.

In this case, the reason for IRA intransigence is that the British Government appears to be pressing not so much for a surrender as for a literal submission, a public mea culpa from the nationalists that will hand them the moral high ground and vindicate their own position throughout the years of the Troubles. The handing over of weapons before a political settlement is tantamount to an admission by the IRA that they were wrong to have taken them up in the first place.

Of course, this is indeed what the British Government thinks: but it is also a telling example of the "manny state". The British Government is treating grown men and women with whom it has political differences as misguided children who will buckle to parental authority in the end. However, the norms of civilised society as interpreted by the British are irrelevant to those who do not see themselves as British. Across the globe, bemused members of the Establishment have had to grapple

with this bizarre truth but nowhere, it seems, have they found it harder than in their own backyard.

Such patronising attitudes, while apparently benign or merely ridiculous, are as much an exercise in power as any armoured convoy, and their effects can be equally murderous. They are a façade behind which the British establishment seeks to protect itself from the painful acknowledgment of its own bloody role in the history of Ireland. It is in this respect that the British Government has shown itself to be most lacking in humanity, and its consequence can only be the breeding of inhumanity in others.

This growing complacency in this country towards the peace process serves only to encourage this approach and make ever more present the dangers of a split in the republican movement and the resumption of violence.

Yours faithfully,
N. D. MARTIN-CLARK
Crawley, West Sussex
20 December

of survival would have been diminished. The emphasis upon decommissioning on the part of British politicians came later than the Declaration, at the behest of Ulster Unionists and of elements in the security forces in Northern Ireland.

Article 10 of the Declaration states: "The British and Irish Governments reiterate that the achievement of peace must involve a permanent end to the use of, or support of, paramilitary violence. They confirm that in these circumstances, democratically mandated parties which establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and which have shown that they abide by the democratic process are free to join in dialogue in due course between the governments and the political parties on the way ahead."

Nothing is said, or implied, here about handing in of weapons.

A survey conducted in November 1994 revealed that there were 130,000 weapons legally held by loyalists. The numbers of illegally held weapons in possession of loyalists is not known. The British Government has yet to explain how loyalist arms are to be decommissioned. Insistence upon decommissioning in advance of political negotiations is therefore not reasonable, and the suggestion that decommissioning was part of the Declaration is deficient in veracity.

Yours faithfully,
GEORGE HUXLEY
Trinity College
Dublin
21 September

We subjects are not amused

From Mr Randhir Singh Bains
Sir: Your leading article "Divorce is the only answer for a modern age" (22 December) rightly states that the British public no longer attaches any stigma to divorce. Neither Prince Charles nor the Princess of Wales, however, is an ordinary member of the public; they are members of an institution that is supposed to act as an epicentre of high moral values. Members of this institution are not democratically elected, but they are still accountable to the general public for espousing and upholding those high moral values.

By admitting adultery in front of millions of television viewers, both Prince Charles and Princess Diana have seriously damaged the moral credibility of the institution of monarchy. Like any other person who holds high office but violates its sanctity, they should both "resign" and publicly apologise for undermining the integrity of one of the highest "offices" in the country.

Yours faithfully,
RANDHIR SINGH BAINS
Gaith Hill, Essex
22 December

everyone else, including Diana and his parents. Even more shamefully, the Palace has taken every opportunity to denigrate and destroy the Princess who, after all, only turned to other men once her husband had blatantly shown his lack of love and respect for her and his sons.

Do we really want a man of this calibre to reign over us? The Windsors need to be reminded that they rule not by "Divine Right" as espoused by the Stuarts but by the will of the people and the people's will is being sorely tried.

Sincerely,
ROBERT READMAN
Sandhurst, Dorset
27 December

From Mr Nicola McLean
Sir: Presumably, since the Church of England is believed at Prince Charles's invitation not to marry again ("Church is saved from discomfiture over remarriage", 22 December), it prefers instead that he should have affairs which will lead to nothing.

Yours faithfully,
NICOLA McLEAN
London, SW1
22 December

From Mr H. E. Lupton
Sir: The most intriguing character in the royal soap is, I think, "Buckingham Palace", clearly an all-knowing and very powerful personage. When I take a stroll down the Mall, to which particular window, chimney, drapery or other official should I direct my gaze in awe and admiration? Even when the *Independent* uses some such phrase as "a spokeswoman for Buckingham Palace", the mystery remains.

Yours sincerely,
H. E. LUPTON
Exeter
22 December

'Right of reply' does not resolve disputes

From Mr Adrian Jack
Sir: Walter Cairns's suggestion (Letters, 21 December) that libel actions be replaced by a statutory right of reply suffers from the grievous defect that the truth

would never be established. The *Sunday Times*'s allegation against David Ashby was that he was a hypocrite in speaking up for family values when he was a practising homosexual. Whether Mr

Ashby was a practising homosexual is a matter of fact which (if disputed) can only ultimately be determined in a court of law.

One sympathises with Mr Ashby, because the evidence for his being a homosexual (at least on the basis of newspaper reports) seemed a little thin; but the jury decided that he was. It follows that the *Sunday Times*'s attack on him was justified. Giving Mr Ashby a right of reply would not have resolved that important issue.

Yours sincerely,
ADRIAN JACK
Barrister
London, EC4
22 December

No judge is above public judgement

From Mr Dermot Feenan
Sir: Justice is not served by Peter Goldsmith's suggestion that the public should not protest to judges and magistrates about their sentencing (Comment, 11 December). Sentencing involves, in part, the exercise of judicial discretion. Unjust exercise of this discretion, of which there is ample evidence in this and other countries, is a legitimate target of public criticism.

Writing letters or communication by other media to judges registers direct concern about justice that the adversarial and appellate system, case law and legislation, courses offered by the Judicial Studies Board or advice from the Lord Chancellor may not, and perhaps cannot, achieve.

British judges, unelected and drawn overwhelmingly from white, male Oxbridge graduates, remain largely removed from significant aspects of public concern. They sometimes apply inappropriate assumptions and stereotypes. In the absence of transparent and more effective rules for addressing improper exercise of judicial office, public challenge of judges can effectively serve the interests of justice.

Yours sincerely,
DERMOT FEENAN
Downpatrick, Co Down

Axed: a creative outlet for insiders

From Ms June Watkins
Sir: I go to a weekly poetry group. Our tutor, a gifted teacher, spends most of her time teaching in Wandsworth Prison. For our last class of the term we brought poems of our own choosing. She brought three poems from the prisoners, not special as poems perhaps, but remarkable as human witness, from men who had previously never even read a poem. To me these classes are a joy to them a lifeline in a grim existence.

Our class starts again in January. There is a cut in Wandsworth Prison, education classes have been cut by 94 per cent - all creative classes, all save the basics. What happens? Who cares?

We seek more and more people to prison, and spend more money on building ever more prisons at vast cost, and there we think we end our responsibility. But our responsibility remains towards people in prison. Education classes in prison are vital and should not be cut. Rather let it be considered whether this huge prison population is justified.

Yours sincerely,
JUNE WATKINS
Old Isleworth, Middlesex
19 December

Inside every great person is a rotten novel

Last week I heard the word "Napoleonic" being used to mean mediocre and small-scale. Now, not much about Napoleon was miny, but in this case it was, as far as I could make out, used absolutely correctly.

It turned up in an edition of *Radio 3's Night Waves*, in which there was a discussion chaired by Roy Porter on politicians who had had writing ambitions. Napoleon, said one expert, had wanted to be a writer before he ever became a soldier, and had in fact written a long Rousseauesque work, which he had hopefully submitted to a literary competition.

Being not even as good as bad Rousseau, it had failed, and Napoleon had compensated for this by joining the army and conquering half the known world, thus leading to exile on St Helena where, as far as I know, he did not return to his ambition of churning out fiction.

The conversation ranged over other politicians who had tried their hand at writing, notably Disraeli, but then somebody brought up the fact that Winston Churchill had written at least one novel.



MILES KINGSTON

"What was it like?" said someone. "Oh," said the Napoleon expert, "I would say that Churchill's fiction had Napoleonic stature."

Meaning drastically bad, like Napoleon's writing. Nice one. But I was disappointed, as the discussion wore on, that nobody referred to Benito Mussolini's novel.

I have never read it. I do not know what it is called. I only know that I saw it listed in a second-hand book-seller's catalogue about four months ago, and I thought to myself at the time: "Mussolini's only novel! Should be well worth a read. I ought to get that." Which was followed by another thought: "Life is too short to read Mussolini's novels, especially when you haven't read any George Eliot yet..."

So I didn't buy it, and I haven't

read Mussolini's novel, nor indeed any Eliot. As indeed I haven't read Sarah Bernhardi's only novel, which I also saw listed in a catalogue once. But I think there is the beginnings of a programme here: forgettable but possibly fascinating novels by people who turned out to be much better at things like acting Hamlet with a wooden leg or invading Abyssinia. I don't know how many of these lost novels there are, how many forgotten novellas by Bismarck, General Franco or the Queen Mother, but I do know that if anyone turns this into a series, they must not leave out the only novel by Jean Harlow, the blonde bombshell.

It's called *Today is Tomorrow* and I bought a second-hand copy of this in what seems to be the first edition, brought out posthumously in paperback by Dell in 1965. The original price was 60 cents and I got it for 15p, but it's worth a good deal more than that, as it is rather a good story about a man and his wife who go crash in 1929 and emerge from it sadder and wiser, especially as the husband has meanwhile gone blind and has to be looked after by the wife, who takes a job as a night-club

hostess to support him, but conceals this from him by making him believe that daytime is night-time...

I have never met anyone who has ever read, or even seen, this novel by Jean Harlow. I did, however, once meet a man at a *Punch* lunch who worked in Hollywood in the Thirties and whose job, among other things, was to chaperone Jean Harlow to night-clubs.

"She was crazy about Art Tatum," he told me. "She couldn't listen to enough of his piano-playing. But the studio wouldn't let her go out at night alone. So I had to accompany her. Believe me, I got to hear a lot of Art Tatum."

I asked him if he knew about Jean Harlow's novel. He said he believed he had heard about it, but he had never read it. It wasn't his job to read her novels. Taking her to hear Art Tatum was bad enough, he said. I couldn't believe my ears. Taking Jean Harlow to hear Art Tatum and being paid for it would be my idea of heaven.

So, anyway, if anyone knows of any other novels unsuspectingly written by celebrities, please let me know. It could make us both famous.

The world needs Britain to stay on the air

ARMS ILLEGALLY!
OH YES YOU DID!
OH NO THEY'RE NOT!
BOO! HISS!
RESIGN!

OH WELL, IT'S TRADITIONAL...

obituaries / gazette

Professor Derek Birchall

Derek Birchall was struck by a vehicle on a pedestrian crossing in London on 30 November. After several days on a life-support machine he died without regaining consciousness on 7 December. So much for bare scientific fact; it would be impossible to describe Derek Birchall in such solemn or merely factual scientific terms.

He started as a chemist and lone inventor but later crossed the chasms between industry, academe and government. I shall remember him for his humour, vitality, inventiveness and great ideas. He was a person who would joke about gravitas; the opposite of the pompous scientist, but one who was also a committed family man and lay preacher.

It is ironic that Birchall's greatest concern over the past 20 years was the health of people connected to hospital machinery, especially dialysis equipment. He had known that certain kidney patients suffer health problems after dialysis, with severe pain in the bones and loss of memory leading to total brain damage. This was clearly dependent on the local water used to wash the blood in the dialysis machine because the problems disappeared when pure water was used. What was amusing to Birchall was the north/south divide: London's filthy water caused no problems whereas cleaner northern water led to damage.

Birchall was the first person to realise the importance of dissolved silica (i.e. sand) in the water. Although this mineral only dissolves in very small quantities, about 10 parts per million, London water is thick with it, whereas Scottish water has little. The crux is that silica does not seem to have any biological function. It is not poisonous and is not used in drugs, a fact which Birchall had agonised over since the 1960s. It seemed bizarre to him that the most common mineral on earth had no role in life.

The ingenious, and controversial, idea he postulated was that silica is only one component in the problem. Some other chemical in the water causes the disease. This turned out to be aluminium, the second most abundant mineral on earth, an all-pervasive slow-acting poison which was washed out of rocks by acid rain, killing plants, fish and ultimately humans. Birchall's deceptively simple reasoning

was that the two most abundant chemicals on earth, silica and aluminium, fight against each other to permit life. All the other common elements, such as hydrogen, oxygen, iron, calcium, sodium, potassium, can then play their role in our bodies.

Birchall knew that the tests and demonstrations required to convince the sceptics would take years. With his colleagues he showed first that fish could be poisoned by very small quantities of aluminium dissolved in water. Then he added silica and the fish survived. When he arrived at Keele University as Professor of Chemistry in 1992 he devised the most beautiful and popular experiment to prove his concept. He asked for student volunteers to drink beer. Beer contains lots of dissolved silica which should pick up aluminium in the body, and remove it in the urine. Birchall demonstrated this by analysing the student urine and seeing the aluminium poison flush out. I cannot visit public houses now without feeling the curative effects.

This story illustrates Birchall's intense love of chemistry, of life and of his colleagues. He was not a conventional academic. He proved that night school in Wigan can lead to great scientific achievement. After National Service in the late 1940s he became interested in fire and the chemistry required to stop it. His first invention was a chemical which he made by stewing blood. This was added to the foam used for fighting fires and helped the foam to survive the flames. He was proud that the money received for this product allowed him to buy a motorbike, which he later sold to get married. It was amazing to him that he could follow his interests in chemistry, yet be paid to support his wife and two sons. Later,



Birchall: experiments with beer

when he joined ICI, his continuing passion for fire led to his invention of "Monnex", a dry powder fire extinguisher which was more effective at dousing petrol fires than anything before or since. The demonstration of this is so dramatic that it has convinced many a young arsonist, including me, to turn to chemistry as a way of life.

Most of Birchall's working life was at ICI Warrington in the 1950s and 1960s, and then at Runcorn in the 1970s and 1980s. Although he rose to the top of the scientific ladder in Britain's largest chemical company, he recognised the intrinsic democracy of scientific ideas, and would enjoy any kind of scientific experiment or discussion around a blackboard. No one was excluded.

Birchall told hilarious stories about the chemical industry, not always complimentary to the management. Once he gave a lecture to the board with the message that ICI was doomed. Of course he was correct. Only the timescale can be argued, and Birchall argued on a long timescale. His paper on the importance of relevance should be read by all who govern industry. His contributions to science were recognised in his FRS election in 1982. His work for government was rewarded by his appointment as OBE in 1990. Birchall will be most remembered by the porters, engineers and metal workers. Whenever they open a furnace door they will see his best-known invention, the woolly ceramic insulation now used in all high-temperature ovens. It was used in the space shuttle, and is found in cars, in pistons and in air bags. He was the first to show how this wool could be made by spinning alumina into fibres by a chemical process, giving a superbly insulating blanket which would survive enormous temperatures. He was still enthusiastically pursuing these ceramic interests, as a director of Ceram Research and as Professor at Keele University, at the time of his death.

Kevin Kendall

James Derek Birchall, chemist; born Leigh, Lancashire 7 October 1930; left ICI 1990-92; FRS 1982; OBE 1990; Professor of Inorganic Chemistry, Keele University 1992-95; married 1956 Pauline Jones (died 1990; two sons); died London 7 December 1995.

Brian Brockless

A fine choral and orchestral conductor, gifted technically in his ability to convey by gesture alone a clarity of performance purpose, Brian Brockless will be remembered for his work with many orchestras in Britain and abroad and for his long tenure, from 1961 to 1971 and from 1979 until his death, as Director of Music at St Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield, in London. Mark Brown of Pro Cantione Antiqua calls him "a leading light in the renaissance of Renaissance music".

The nephew of George Brockless (Head of Music at Battersea Polytechnic), he was educated at the Stationers' Company School and the Royal

College of Music. There, the great influence was his composition teacher, Herbert Howells, seen at its strongest in his *English Elegy for String Orchestra*, dedicated to Howells and originally the slow movement of the quartet written for his BMus examination. Although his own compositions show many more influences, the principal lesson that he learnt from Howells was "how to live".

He studied organ with John Dykes Bower and accompanied with Hubert Dawkes. He pursued composition studies with Mátyás Seiber. He openly acknowledged his debt to his conducting mentor, Sergio Celibidache, with whom he studied

at the Accademia Musicale in Siena from 1960 to 1963, and later in Bologna, winning the 1963 conducting prize. As his assistant he worked with Celibidache throughout Europe and appeared as guest conductor in Romania, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium and Venezuela. His own career included concerts with the English Chamber Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Northern Sinfonia, and the musical directorship of the London Schubert Orchestra. He made many broadcasts and pioneered the presentation of choral music on the then new ITV with the series *A Date with Music*.

Brockless was well grounded

in the repertoire from an early appointment as Organist of St Mary, Aldermanbury, in London, and as deputy at the Savoy Chapel. His understanding of choral music came from his own skills as a singer. He deployed his counter-tenor voice as a soloist with his sister Pauline in Wigmore Hall recitals, as a choir member of the Savoy Chapel of Henry Washington's Schola Polyphonia and the Elizabethan Singers. He directed the choir and orchestra at Goldsmiths' College and founded the Priory Festival Choir. In addition to his choir at Smithfield, he founded the St Bartholomew Singers (now the Pro Cantione Antiqua).

A superb teacher, Brockless was Professor of Harmony and Orchestration at the Royal Academy of Music for two decades and ran a conducting class at Morley College. From the 1950s he worked with his uncle at Battersea Polytechnic, when it became the University of Surrey in 1967 he became its first Musical Director. His greatest achievement in education, as Senior Lecturer, was the design of the university's music degree course, innovative and influential in being the first to acknowledge the importance of the recording industry by the inclusion of the Tomteite course.

He left a small but fine lega-

cy of compositions. A technically demanding *Introduction, Passacaglia and Coda* was written for Francis Jackson for the 90th anniversary celebrations of Westminster Abbey in 1966. Few recordings exist of his music, though he himself recorded this work in a 1983 collection of English church music with his own church choir. Other recently reissued organ compositions include *Prélude, Toccata and Chaconne*, the *Fantasia, Adagio and Fugue* written for the 1969 Cheltenham Festival, a *Toccata*, and *Toccata for an Occasion* commissioned for the Peterborough Organ Weeks.

Richard Williams



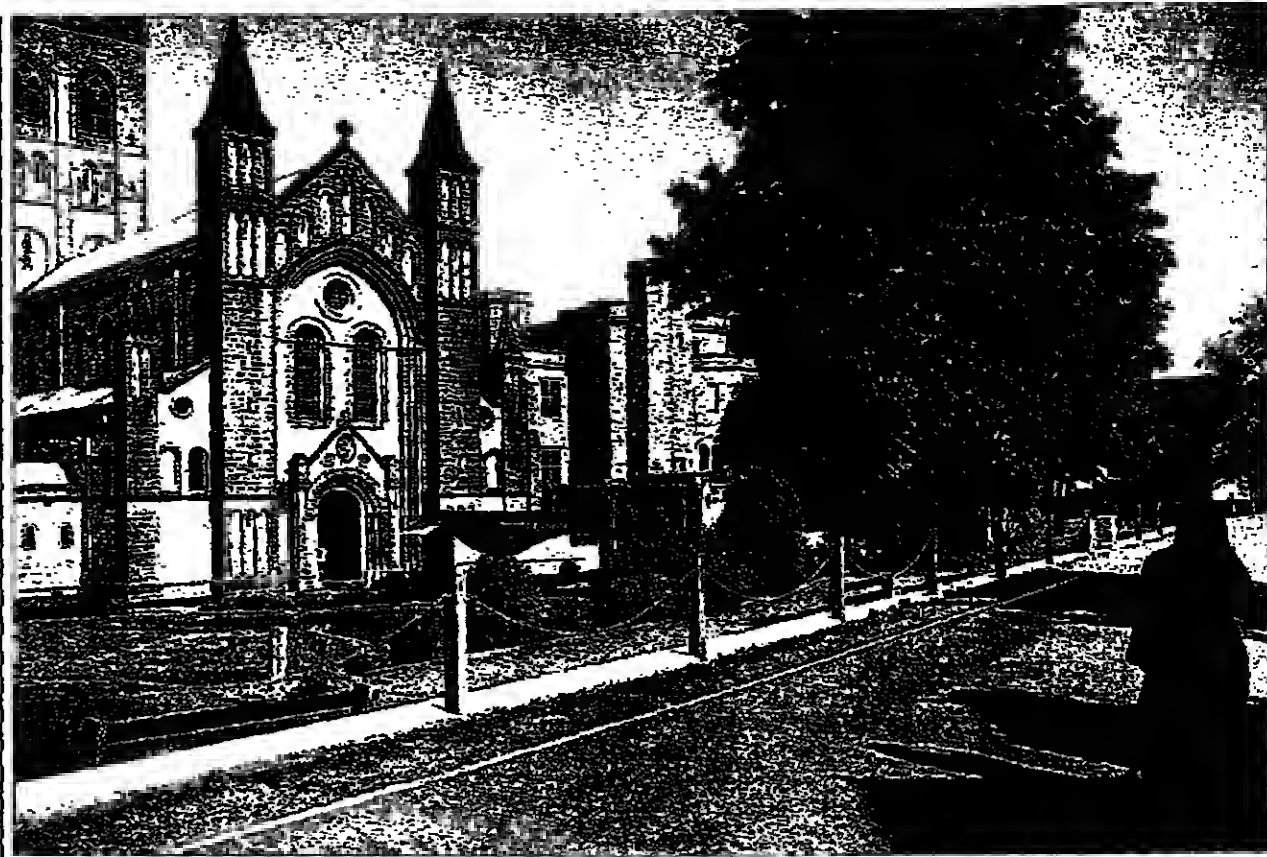
Brockless: music at Smithfield

Brian Brockless, conductor, composer, organist and educator; born 21 January 1926; married 1950 Muriel Jones (one son; marriage dissolved); 1976 Jennifer Wright (one son); died Ripley 18 December 1995.

In 1958 he and his friend Peter Wyndham Allen, a ballet dancer, moved from Scotland to the Ashdown Forest in Sussex, Urquhart not returning to live in Scotland until 1990 after Allen had died. In his 30-odd years living in a somewhat middle-class milieu in lush southern England, the erstwhile working-class lad from north of the Border lost much of his feel and ear for the minute accuracy of contemporary Scottish life. The stories of his later, rather bitter and isolated years - correctly he felt unappreciated by the present Scottish literary establishment - owed more to the kailyard than he cared to acknowledge.

Giles Gordon

Fredrick Burrows Urquhart, writer; born Edinburgh 12 July 1912; died Musselburgh 2 December 1995.



Buckfast Abbey in Devon, completed in 1337; Hooper was a monk there from 1930, and Abbot from 1957 to 1976 Photograph: Tom Pilon

Abbot Placid Hooper

Placid Hooper was the fourth abbot of the restored Buckfast Abbey in Devon, and the first English one. He set the monastery on its course from a German community belonging to an Italian grouping of abbeys to an English Benedictine community. Founded in 1018 with the authority of King Canute, Buckfast was destroyed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and only became a monastery again in 1882, when monks expelled from France by anti-religious laws moved there. With them were two young Germans from Swabia, a Catholic district of the kingdom of Württemberg. When, a few years later, the penal laws in France were repealed, most of the community returned to the mother house. The two Germans did a recruitment campaign in Swabia, and Buckfast became a German community.

By 1903 they had become independent of the French mother house and able to select their own abbot. The first, Boniface, was one of the original Swabian monks; the second, Anscar, elected in 1906, oversaw the rebuilding by the monks of the abbey church on its original 12th-century foundations; the work was completed in July 1937, a few months before Abbot Anscar died. His successor,



Abbot Placid: Benedictine Rule

Abbot Bruno Fehrenbacher, guided the mostly German community through the difficult years of the Second World War. He resigned as Abbot in 1956 and the community elected Father Placid Hooper.

Father Placid was born Thomas Hooper, in 1911, into a family of Taunton grocers. He was educated at Hush's Grammar School in Taunton and in 1929 joined the community at Buckfast, where he was given the name of Placid. He made his profession as a monk the following year and after the prescribed theological studies was ordained priest in 1935. In these days of clericalism and triumphalism in Catholic circles, the intricate ceremonial of litur-

gical functions required dedicated specialists; Father Placid, who had been keenly interested in the liturgy since he was a junior monk, was appointed Master of Ceremonies.

In the Second World War Placid Hooper was one of four English members of the community allowed to offer their services as Chaplains to the Armed Forces. He was called up in 1939 and attached to a medical unit, seeing service in France and Belgium (escaping via Dunkirk), then with the Eighth Army in the Middle East, Italy, Greece and Austria.

On his return to Buckfast in 1945 he was appointed Novice Master, whose task it was to train the aspirants to the monastic life according to the Benedictine Rule as lived at Buckfast. With his interest in the liturgy and his phenomenal memory of Buckfast's history he was well equipped for such a role.

On his election as Abbot in 1957, Hooper realised that, with a community now almost entirely English, it would be easier if the administrative links with the Continent were broken in favour of closer links with the other Benedictine monasteries in England, such as Downside (the senior house), Ampleforth and Douai. In 1960 Buckfast was officially

transferred to the English Benedictine Congregation.

Benedictine monasteries in England have been prominent in the field of Catholic education, and under Hooper's leadership the Buckfast community opened a prep school for boys. The school prospered until changing circumstances brought about its closure in 1994.

Buckfast lies between Dartmoor and the "English Riviera", and receives some 500,000 visitors a year. The abbey is also a parish church. To avoid clashes between groups of visitors and parish services Hooper launched the building of a Blessed Sacrament chapel at the east end of the church, cut off from the main body by a glass partition. Thus services can be held without interference from visitors.

Placid Hooper's term of office ended in 1976. He spent the next 18 years welcoming the many visitors to Buckfast and as a guide to the abbey church. On 8 December he celebrated the diamond jubilee of his priesthood. Three days later he died.

Leo Smith OSB

Thomas Hooper, priest; born 17 July 1911; clothed a monk as Dom Placid 1929; ordained priest 1935; Abbot of Buckfast 1957-76; died 11 December 1995.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

GUMPERT: On 17 December, to Dorothy (nee Faber) and Benjamin, a son, Frederick John.

RENSMANN / LAWRENCE: On Christmas Eve 1995, in Bonn, a Helen and Thilo, a son. Charles Lawrence, a brother for Edward and Thomas.

DEATHS

GUMBERT: H. Edward, dearly loved husband, father and grandfather, peacefully at home on 25 December. Funeral at St Martin's Church, East Horley, at 11am, Saturday 30 December. No flowers please.

MEADE: James Edward, on 22 December, peacefully at his home in Little Shelford, aged 88. Emeritus Professor of Political Economy in Cambridge University.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2011 or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £650 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (funerals, obituaries, notices, marriages, divorces, etc.) should be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line. VAT extra. Please include a daytime telephone number.

Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am to 10.15am. Scots Guards mount the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, hand provided by the Irish Guards.

Birthdays

Mr Imtiaz Alam, former Pakistan cricketer, 54; Mr Lew Ayres, actor, 87; Mr Terry Burcher, footballer, 37; Mr William Camps, former Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge, 85; Mr Donald Carr, cricketer, 89; Sir Eli Clarke, former President, Trinidad and Tobago, 78; Major Madeleine Craggs, Secretary, Imperial Cancer Research Fund, 59; Mr Thomas Grubb VC, 81; Mr Max Hastings, Editor, the London Evening Standard, 50; Mr Roy Hattersley MP, 63; Mr Noel Johnson, actor, 79; Mr Nigel Kennedy, violinist, 39; Mrs Frances Meynell, former leader, ILEA, 58; Sir Patrick O'Connor, former Lord Justice of Appeal, 81; Mrs Bridget Prentice MP, 43; Mr Simon Raven, author and playwright, 68; Mrs Joan Ruddock MP, 52; Dame Maggie Smith, actress, 61; The Right Rev William Westwood, former Bishop of Peterborough, 70; The Hon Geoffrey Wilson, former chairman, Delta plc, 66.

Anniversaries

Births: Wenzel Robert, Count von Galkenberg, composer, 1783; Sir John Bennet Lawes, agriculturalist, 1814; Sir Archibald Geikie, geologist, 1835; Thomas Woodrow Wilson, 28th US President, 1856; Sir John William Fortescue, military historian, 1859; Philip Wilson Silver, artist, 1860; Pio Baroja Nestor, novelist, 1872; Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington, astronomer, 1882; Sir John Greer Ervine, playwright and drama critic, 1883; Roger Huntington Sessions, composer, 1896; Earl "Fats" Hines, jazz pianist, 1915; Deaths: St Francis de Sales, 1622; Laurent de Laffite, painter, 1656; Pierre Bayle, philosopher and writer, 1706; Rob Roy (Robert Macgregor), clan chief, 1734; Emmerich de Vattel, diplomat and jurist, 1767; John Campbell, historian, 1775; Thomas Babington

Macaulay, first Baron Macaulay, poet and historian, 1839; Thomas Creswick, painter, 1869; Alfred Cellier, composer, 1891; George Robert Gissing, novelist, 1903; Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, engineer, 1923; Maurice Joseph Ravel, composer, 1937; Theodore Herman Albert Dreiser, novelist, 1945; Victor Emmanuel III, former King of Italy, 1947; Jack Lovelock, athlete and surgeon, killed 1949; Paul Hindemith, composer, 1962; Max (Maximilian) Raoul Stein, film music composer, 1971; Sam Peckinpah, film director, 1984. On this day: Westminster Abbey was dedicated, 1065; Spain recognized the independence of Mexico, 1830; the first US patent for chewing gum was issued, 1866; the centre pavilion of the Tay Bridge in Scotland collapsed, taking with it a train, including 75 passengers and crew, 1879; the world's first public film show took place in Paris, 1895; Mestia, Sicily, was almost completely destroyed by an earthquake and over 150,000 lives were lost, 1908; the independence of Estonia was proclaimed, 1917; the Irish Free State became the Republic of Ireland, 1937; Achmed Sukarno was elected president of the Indonesian Republic, 1949; an earthquake in Pakistan killed more than 4,000 people, 1975; today is the Feast Day of St Anthony of Liria, The Holy Innocents (Children) and St Theodore the Sanctified.

Royal Aeronautical Society

The following have been elected to Fellowship of the Royal Aeronautical Society:

Prince Fahad Bin Abdulrahman Wing Cdr John Michael Akkash, Norman William Angel, Michael Bagshaw, John William Cortell Baker, Oliver J. Baker, Oliver C. Bolles, Martin Theron Broadhurst, Frederick Austin Burke, Trevor Herbert Bush, Cpt Capt Edmund Reginald Cox, Air Commodore Donald Cyril Cousins, Trevor Rodney Crabtree, Bernard Dutton, Capt John Stephen Fairer, Michael

John Gerald Farman, Air Commodore Richard Farooq, John Ferret, Air Commodore Richard Michael Steven Fitzgerald-Lombard, Colin Michael Fowler, Michael James Fowler, Air Marshal Sir Timothy Gardner, Philip Norman Goodard, Ian Adam Goodwin, John Alexander Gordon, Gordon Robert James, David William Hill, Anthony John Hines, Don Nung Ung, Air Chief Marshal Muhammad Abbas Khan, David K. Chen, Dr A. Coudis, Mr M.C.E. Davies, Mr C.N. Dean, Mr J.G. Dowling, Mr D.J. Faulkner, Dr P.L. Galbraith, Mr R.J. Hamblin, Mr T. Harker, Mr R.P. Harker, Dr B. Harker, Dr J.M. Hume, Dr J. Lohr, Dr B. Kellerman, Dr C.J. Lawrence, Mr G.D. Laid, Dr A.J. Maudsley, Dr R.G. Maudsley, Mr Y.A. Penn, Dr O.J. Rabe, Dr A.J. Roberts, Dr S.C. Ryan, Dr H.B. Salk, Mr O.S. Smart, Mr A. Smith, Mr J.M. Thompson, Dr S.P. Townsend, Mr L.E. Warren.

Institute of Mathematics

The following have been elected to Fellowship of the Institute of Mathematics and granted Chartered Mathematician status:

Professor Z.U. Ahmad, Mr N. Block, Dr J.S. Brankley, Mr A.A.S. Bryson, Dr N.R. Burke, Dr K. Chen, Dr A. Coudis, Mr M.C.E. Davies, Mr C.N. Dean, Mr J.G. Dowling, Mr D.J. Faulkner, Dr P.L. Galbraith, Mr R.J. Hamblin, Mr T. Harker, Mr R.P. Harker, Dr B. Harker, Dr J.M. Hume, Dr J. Lohr, Dr B. Kellerman, Dr C.J. Lawrence, Mr G.D. Laid, Dr A.J. Maudsley, Dr R.G. Maudsley, Mr Y.A. Penn, Dr O.J. Rabe, Dr A.J. Roberts, Dr S.C. Ryan, Dr H.B. Salk, Mr O.S. Smart, Mr A. Smith, Mr J.M. Thompson, Dr S.P. Townsend, Mr L.E. Warren.

Wills

Mr Noel Joseph Terence Montgomerie Needham, the scientist, Sinologist, and Master of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, left estate valued at £871,856 net. He left £5,000 to Gonville and Caius College for two annual prizes, and the greater part of the residue to the Le Gue-Dien Memorial Charitable Trust, and to the East Asian History of Science Trust (Needham Research Institute) for the completion and updating of his work *Science and Civilization in China*.

No nonsense from sects or atheists

Meanings of Christmas

To experience Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve is pure joy, declares Mary Kenny, who offers bracing advice for the Politically Correct and the Imaginatively challenged.

Christmas is a rotten time to be an atheist: but then atheists embrace such a bleak view of life (in my experience) that perhaps they do not care for the "sentimentality" of Christmas anyhow. They are also so literal-minded, with their "but is it true?" of the whole epic of Christianity, rather than accepting that this is where we dwell in the spirit, which is manifest in human beings, is now and ever shall be, world without end, amen. Atheism is also curiously unpragmatic, by the way: there is no society in which it has ever worked.

So pity the high-minded atheist (or particularly scrupulous agnostic) parent at this time, who frets about the question of whether his child may be allowed to take part in the school Nativity play, on the Gradgrind grounds, that this is a purely fanciful view of the universe, and it is absurd to let children get themselves up as angels.

How long does the shade of Edmund Gosse linger, who being from a fundamentalist Protestant sect was not permitted to celebrate Christmas, and was made to confess when he tasted mince-pies that he had partaken of the food of idolaters. Actually, I know some very nice fundamentalist Protestants, but I am not taking any nonsense about not celebrating Christmas because it has been turned into a pagan fertility rite, any more than I am taking the Politically Correct line that it is not sufficiently "multi-cultural". Christmas is supposed to be eclectic, to embrace what was in the pagan, too, just as Christianity has embraced what was in our Greek, Roman and Jewish heritage.

Anyway, anyone who has ever had a little blub at a children's Nativity play

knows that the Nativity story is the most superbly multi-cultural event you could devise: the Three Kings are traditionally represented as being from different races, the angels look perfect if you are a little Japanese child, and Jesus, Joseph and Mary are a Semitic family - Joseph can be played as an Arab localite, and Mary must be the Jewish mother of all Jewish mothers. It can thus be a Middle East peace parable.

The Nativity story also works very well as a sort of left-wing, or anti-capitalist, parable (for bleak atheists looking for an excuse to enjoy it). In fact, as a counter-fertility rite, any more than I am taking the Politically Correct line that it is not sufficiently "multi-cultural". Christmas is supposed to be eclectic, to embrace what was in the pagan, too, just as Christianity has embraced what was in our Greek, Roman and Jewish heritage.

everything: that Jesus was born poor and homeless and that Mary was to all intents and purposes an unmarried mother, and that life works sometimes by paradox.

The carols get over this point very well, and hearing a five-year-old lip "Away in a Manger" anyhow knocks Traviata expiring at Covent Garden into a cocked hat. "Once in Royal David's City" is a humdinger of a carol for illustrating this miraculous counterpoint between the haves and have-nots. "He came down on earth from heaven, / Who is God and Lord of All, / And his shelter was a stable / And his cradle was a stall; / With the poor, and mean, and lowly, / Lived on earth our Saviour holy."

You don't have to be a Christian, or even a believer, to see that the Nativity story is something wonderful which celebrates life, and helps us share and experience a great story which can be taken at many different levels. The babe in a manger is linked with Original Sin; that useful, pre-Rousseau doctrine which reminds us of the flawed nature that is ours. But there is also a feminist interpretation of the way that it "empowers" the unique creative gifts of women as mother, and puts her at the centre of the narrative.

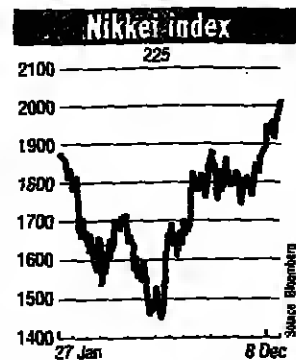
For those of us who are believers, it is simply a great truth, but it can be extended to unbelievers as a great metaphor, a great symbolic idea and a great story. Literal-minded atheists or scrupulous agnostics should not deprive themselves of pleasure and emotional intensity by not subscribing to its beauty; but if they do not share in it, we can honestly say it is their loss. To experience Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, in celebration of the Nativity of Christ, is to know joy.

Economics: Tokyo reports rising output and investment, but US sees new fall in consumer confidence

Japan heads for new year recovery

DIANE COYLE
Economics Correspondent

Early signs of recovery in the Japanese economy helped the Nikkei share index climb above 20,000 yesterday for the first time in more than a year. Across the Pacific, new signs of economic slowdown in the US took Treasury bond prices to their highest for more than two years. The yield on the benchmark long-term bond had fallen to 6 per cent by midday. US share prices also moved up, helping equities in London to close just below their record levels. The FT-SE 100 index ended just over 18 points higher at 3,676.4.



The pound climbed sharply against the dollar yesterday. It closed nearly 2 cents higher at \$1.5602, and also rose more than a penny to DM2.330. Its

index against a range of currencies rose 0.6 to 83.6. Traders said that a single big purchase of sterling in the Far East in very thin holiday trade accounted for the move. Japan's industrial output rose unexpectedly sharply in November, and the Ministry of Trade and Industry said it expected production to climb in December and January too. The 1.3 per cent gain last month was the second increase in a row, after months of declining production. The leading indicator for the Japanese economy rose above 50, the dividing line between recovery and recession, for the first time in October, according

to figures released by the Economic Planning Agency. Although the EPA warned that it was too early to be sure of a clear upward trend in the economy, the figures boosted optimism about corporate earnings. The Nikkei 225 share price index closed up more than 107 points at 20,011.76, the highest since October 1994. Technology and electronics stocks led the advance. Yesterday's optimism was a contrast to earlier gloom about Japan's prospects for emerging from its economic slump. Economists steadily revised down their forecasts for growth throughout 1995. "There is certainly a more upbeat mood now. This year is

ending on a strong note," said Stephen Hannah, head of research at IBI International. Hannah Nison, an economist at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said: "The figures signal the turning point for the economy. There should be a gradual recovery in 1996." Officials at Miti said that output was growing faster than forecast. The electronics and telecommunications sectors were likely to spearhead growth, and investment spending was on the increase. Construction orders last month were 10.4 per cent lower than a year earlier, but the industry is expected to start to recover. New housing starts rose

0.1 per cent in the year to November, the first increase for nine months. The auto industry remained weak, however. Finance minister Masayoshi Takemura said: "I hope that the economy will be able to regain a 2 to 3 per cent level of growth." The reversal since April of the yen's earlier surge against the dollar - thanks to intervention by the Group of Seven industrial countries - had contributed to the recovery. At IBI, Mr Hannah said there was still great uncertainty about the state of the financial sector hanging over the economy. Banks would have to write off substantial debts during the first quarter of 1996. The

rising trend in unemployment - which reached 3.4 per cent last month - would make consumers cautious about spending. US statistics yesterday added to the evidence that growth is slowing. Consumer confidence fell in December, according to a survey by the Conference Board. Sales of existing homes fell 1.7 per cent in November, although they remained 9.5 per cent higher than a year earlier. Economists said this was a sign of slower economic growth, but falling mortgage rates would underpin the housing market. Official US statistics have been delayed by the continuing Federal Government shutdown.

Tetley takeover rumours intensify

MATTHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

Whitbread yesterday ruled out a rights issue to help finance its £1.05bn offer for Forte's restaurant business. But speculation was growing that the brewing and food retailing giant was poised to launch a separate bid soon for Carlsberg. Tetley, in a deal that could lead to a cash call on shareholders. Peter Jarvis, chief executive of Whitbread, the UK's fourth-biggest brewer, said: "We are very interested in strengthening this part of our business [brewing]. If I could find anything half as good as Boddingtons, I'd of course be interested."

The company bought Boddington's brewing operations in 1989. A purchase of Carlsberg Tetley could make Whitbread the largest brewer in the country, topping Scottish & Newcastle Breweries, which recently bought Courage for £435m to move into pole position. Meanwhile, Granada was last night under pressure to raise its £3.7m bid for Forte or to give up. City analysts said: "Kleinwort Benson suggested the offer might have to be raised by 15 per cent to ensure success. Granada has until 9 January to increase its bid." A Granada insider said: "We've got plenty of room in terms of borrowing power, and banks have backed us without hesitation." But the company officially declined to comment on its intentions, saying only that the Whitbread offer undervalued the restaurant assets. Gerry Robinson, chief executive of Granada, said the sale was "a brilliant deal from the point of view of Whitbread" but not in the best interests of Forte shareholders. He claimed that Granada's offer valued the restaurant holdings at a higher price-earnings multiple than the Whitbread offer, although Forte disputed this. Forte said the deal, which would reduce debt by 80 per cent, made sense for shareholders, and hinted that a special dividend might be on offer when the final defence document is published on 2 January. The company is also expected to announce a new valuation for its hotels operations.

Continued page 17

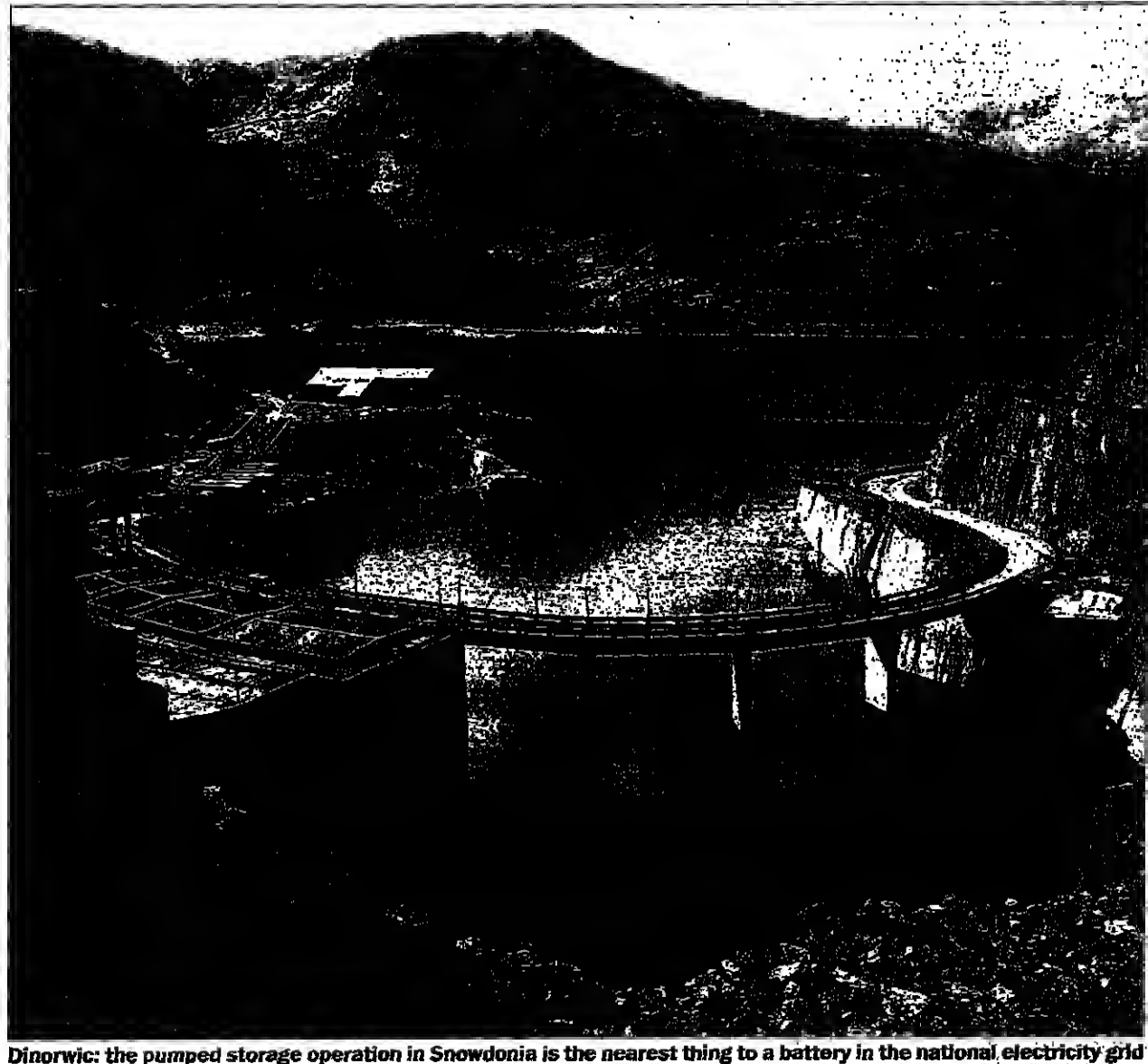
£200m First Hydro windfall for Recs

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

A windfall of more than £200m was revealed yesterday by the 12 regional electricity companies, which have been paid far more for their pumped storage power-generating business than they expected five weeks ago. First Hydro, the Snowdonia power generator which the Recs owned, was sold to the US company Mission Energy for £200m, including cash balances of £27.5m. The Recs that are still quoted on the stock market said they were keeping the money for use in their businesses and not passing it to shareholders. The amounts raised range from £36.7m at South Wales Electricity and £44m at North-east Electric to £71m at London Electricity and £74.5m at Southern, which has the biggest stake. The sale gave a modest boost to most Rec share prices. Mission is one of four bidders shortlisted to buy £1bn of power stations put up for sale by National Power, the biggest generator in Britain. If it succeeds in the second deal it would become Britain's fourth largest electricity generator. Mission beat off competition to buy First Hydro from

Scottish Hydro, the north of Scotland electricity generator, which is thought to have offered nearly £200m less. The other failed bid was from Dominion Energy, a US company. The Recs' advisers believe the cold snap just before Christmas, when prices soared in the electricity market, helped them gain a high price for First Hydro, by underlining the volatility of British power prices. The business makes its money by using cheap off-peak electricity to pump water to high level reservoirs at Dinorwic and Blaenau-Ffestiniog in Snowdonia. When demand for electricity is high, the water is run down the mountains to low level reservoirs where it generates electricity again. It is the national electricity grid's equivalent of a storage battery for saving power. First Hydro becomes highly profitable when electricity market prices soar. However, Mission has also indicated that a favourable tax position made a high bid possible. The sale price is more than £200m above the £450m value put on the business in the National Grid prospectus published on 21 November, and will lead to a substantial extra capital gains bill for the Recs.

National Grid had previously owned First Hydro, but just ahead of its own flotation merged the business into a separate company owned by the 12 Recs. The Recs that are still independent have passed the value of their National Grid shares directly to their own shareholders, but said yesterday they would keep all the cash from the First Hydro sale to use in their own businesses. In the competition to buy the National Power stations, with generating capacity of 4,000 megawatts, Mission is competing against Enron, Applied Power Systems and Hanson's electricity distribution subsidiary, Eastern Group. National Power confirmed Mission was still in the running and said bids were being evaluated. Mission is part of SCEcorp, a \$6bn (£4bn) US utility whose subsidiaries include Southern California Edison, one of the biggest generators in the US. With the domestic market tightly controlled and unexciting, the group has joined the assault by US utilities on foreign power markets. It has recently invested \$250m in Indonesia and is involved in two small gas power stations, Roscoff and Derwent, in the UK.



Dinorwic: the pumped storage operation in Snowdonia is the nearest thing to a battery in the national electricity grid

Greedy eyes focus on £20bn Tessa bonanza

CLIFFORD GERMAN

Tour operators whose 1996 holiday brochures traditionally appear between Christmas and New Year, are greedily eyeing the £20bn wall of money that will pour out of tax-exempt special savings accounts - Tessa - that mature in the next six months. At least £5bn will be tax-free interest which cannot be reinvested in a new Tessa, and tour operators are hoping the mainly middle-aged savers will splash out on a luxury cruise when their nest-eggs hatch. Car dealers and department stores are also praying savers

Top Tessas - variable rate tax free accounts 1991-96

Top Tiddlers	Top Building Societies	Top Banks
Kent Refinance £12,400	Bradford & Bingley HS £12,093	TSB £11,094
Dunfermline £12,343	Dartmouth £12,058	Royal Bank of Scot £11,870
National Counties £12,317	Halifax £12,050	Abbey National £11,829
J Hodge Bank £12,226	Bristol & West Bonus £12,019	Halifax £11,560
Milton Motway £12,221	Woodwich £12,011	Lloyds £11,533

Halifax Building Society is guaranteeing a fixed rate of 7 per cent for the next five years for Tessa holders who have a maximum £9,000 in a maturing Tessa and reinvest before the end of January. A variable rate alternative will be offered starting at 5.9 per cent. Northern Rock is topping the Halifax offer with a starting rate of 8 per cent for a £9,000 investment on its next generation of variable-rate Tessas. Birmingham Midshires announced seven new Tessas, including an escalating rate Tessa starting at 6.25 per cent in the first year, rising to 9 per cent in year five.

tax-free interest at their disposal. But banks and building societies that offer Tessa accounts will not give up without a fight. Yesterday alone three more providers announced terms to try to persuade account-holders to roll their savings over rather than withdraw them.

Taylor Woodrow lands £133m Russian rail deal

RUSSELL HOTTEN
London
PHIL REEVES
Moscow

Taylor Woodrow, the UK construction group, has won a contract to build a railway terminal complex in St Petersburg, the company's biggest contract in the former Soviet Union. The £133m (£133m) deal is part of a massive project for a high-speed rail line between the city and the Russian capital, Moscow, that will cost between £3bn and £5bn. The railway line is one of Russia's largest infrastructure ventures and has huge symbolic significance because it unites the two historic cities with a non-stop service. Sketchy details of the contract were announced by the public/private transport group, RAO-VSM, in Russia on Christmas Day. Taylor Woodrow was yesterday still unclear about aspects of the project. No state finance is being provided, and RAO-VSM will not give the go-ahead for building work until negotiations with Western banks about fund-raising are completed, next year. Taylor Woodrow, whose costs are being underwritten by the UK's Export Credit Guarantee Department, said there was no question of starting work before the finances were agreed. When the rail line is finished it will mean that the 645km journey, often involving an overnight trip, will be cut to 2.5 hours, offering travelling times normally associated with Japanese high-speed links.

Taylor Woodrow is teaming up with a Finnish construction company, Skanska Oy, to build the terminal in the centre of St Petersburg, which will include a hotel, shops and offices. The complex is understood to have been designed by HOK International, the London architect. A further 10 rail stations are to be built along the route, though contracts have not been placed, as large-scale works to clear explosives left from World War II have to be carried out before construction can start. It is hoped that by upgrading and standardising Russian rail lines they will eventually be linked to the expanding west European rail services. Taylor Woodrow has been operating in Russia for about 10 years, and is regarded by the Moscow authorities as one of the most highly-rated Western construction firms doing business in the country. Current projects include building and refurbishing a cigarette factory for BAT, and it has built two fast-food Pizza Hut restaurants in Moscow. The company said that it had never experienced any problems with corruption.

Now Asda plans own brands in vitamin price war

NIGEL COPE

Boots the Chemist and other pharmacy groups were refusing to be drawn into a price war yesterday following a fresh challenge from Asda on the price of vitamins and minerals. Asda is planning to launch an extended range of own label medicines in the Spring. The range will increase from 17 to more than 50 products. It will

also include own label versions of Seven Seas and Sanatogen, two of the vitamin brands included in Asda's initial challenge to the price maintenance agreement on non-prescription drugs in October. The prices are expected to be more than 15 per cent below those of branded products. Boots said yesterday that it would continue to support price maintenance on medicines. It

also said that it had cut prices via a three-for-the-price-of-two campaign on the Boots brand of vitamins. Other retailers were refusing to say how they might react to Asda's latest initiative. Superdrug said it already had a lower priced range of own label products but would be "keeping an eye" on the situation. Sainsbury said Asda was simply copying other supermarket

groups in the move towards more own label products which attract a higher margin. Around two thirds of Sainsbury's sales are own label compared to just 34 per cent at Asda. The City appeared unmoved by Asda's challenge. Asda's share price remained unchanged at 110.5p while Boots and Kingfisher, which owns the Superdrug chain, registered marginal declines.

The price maintenance agreement covering over-the-counter medicines has stood for 25 years but is now the subject of an Office of Fair Trading review after Asda's campaign. Asda started its campaign by cutting the prices of around 80 vitamins and minerals by up to 20 per cent. But it ran into trouble when manufacturers successfully applied for an injunction.

STOCK MARKETS					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1995 High	1995 Low
FTSE 100	3676.40	+18.10	+0.5	3680.40	2954.20
FTSE 250	3999.70	+14.30	+0.4	3999.70	2967.30
FTSE 350	1823.50	+8.40	+0.5	1815.10	931.00
FT Small Cap	1936.42	+4.72	+0.2	1932.11	1678.61
FT All Share	1795.71	+10.92	+0.6	1837.78	1468.23
Norwich	5116.04	+5.78	+0.1	5216.47	3832.08
Tesco	2001.75	+107.04	+5.3	2001.75	1448.41
Heron	9882.23	+53.03	+0.5	10032.93	9867.93
Franklin	2280.43	+0.00	+0.0	2317.01	1910.96

INTEREST RATES					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1995 High	1995 Low
UK 3 month	6.50	-0.01	-0.2	6.50	6.50
UK 6 month	6.50	-0.01	-0.2	6.50	6.50
UK 1 year	6.50	-0.01	-0.2	6.50	6.50
US 3 month	7.50	-0.01	-0.1	7.50	7.50
US 6 month	7.50	-0.01	-0.1	7.50	7.50
US 1 year	7.50	-0.01	-0.1	7.50	7.50

CURRENCIES					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1995 High	1995 Low
£/\$	1.5602	+0.0002	+0.01	1.5602	1.5602
£/DM	2.3300	+0.0001	+0.00	2.3300	2.3300
£/¥	160.00	+0.00	0.00	160.00	160.00
£/A\$	0.6500	+0.0001	+0.01	0.6500	0.6500
£/S\$	1.2500	+0.0001	+0.01	1.2500	1.2500
£/HK\$	7.8000	+0.0001	+0.01	7.8000	7.8000

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR MORTGAGE CUSTOMERS

Interest Rate Change

The rates of interest for existing mortgage customers (in appropriate cases the basic rate) will decrease by 0.25% with effect from the 5th January 1996, and by a further 0.25% with effect from the 1st February 1996.

Fixed rate mortgages are not affected during the contractual fixed rate period.

In cases where mortgage interest rate changes are subject to notice, the decreases will take place after the appropriate notice periods which will commence on 5th January 1996, and 1st February 1996 respectively.

There will be no change to the interest rates on existing Secured Personal Loans regulated by the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

For customers participating in the Society's annual review procedure, these interest rate decreases will be taken into account when calculating new monthly payments from March 1996 or, in appropriate cases, the anniversary of the mortgage.

Norwich and Peterborough

Chief Office: Peterborough Business Park, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE3 6LZ
Telephone: Peterborough (01753) 875751
Member of The Building Societies Association, Member of LMA.
Assets covered £1.5 billion



Granada must stop tweaking and start bidding

COMMENT

If Forte shareholders extract too high a price, there will be nothing left for Mr Robinson and the deal becomes pointless

The time is approaching for big decisions at Granada. Tweaking the £3.2bn bid for Forte no longer looks enough to do the trick. A very substantial increase in the offer, possibly as much as 15 per cent, may be the only way forward and even then the uplift is going to have to be substantially in cash. More paper and the law of diminishing returns begins to set in – the increased value of the offer may be wiped out by a falling share price.

The main planks of Forte's defence are now in the public arena. The only thing that remains is a full-blown property revaluation, which we are promised with the final defence circular on 2 January. Here, Sir Rocco Forte has to watch his step, for too high a valuation could well backfire by demonstrating the lamentably small return he has been making on those assets.

So far, Forte seems to have had the better of the war, despite its track record and state of unpreparedness at the start. The sale to Whitbread of the restaurants for £1.05bn falls short of a master-stroke, for it has the smell of a forced sale at a poor price, but it may be enough to make Forte's shareholders hold out for a lot more than the present Granada offer.

The question they have to ask themselves is this. After sale of the restaurants, what are they left with? The immediate pay-back is a special dividend of up to 50p a share. Chastened by the experience of the Granada assault, the rump hotels group presumably also becomes a much better-run company

with real value flowing through to shareholders. Presumably the operative word here, for quite a bit of faith is required to believe this.

The sale to Whitbread is undoubtedly on the cheap side, though it is more than could have been achieved through the previously planned demerger. An exit p/c of 17 compares poorly with the 23 times earnings that Pelican trades on and the 26 that Pizza Express sells at. Furthermore, Forte has shut the door on an auction by making this a lock-out deal, a device which from the seller's point of view is always hard to justify. This in itself might give Forte's shareholders pause for thought: has anything really changed at this company?

In a bid that is becoming famous for its one-liners, Gerry Robinson's "There has been more innovation at Forte during the course of this bid than in the past 10 years," is particularly poignant.

To hand over all that value to Granada, admittedly with an on-going stake in its future since part of the offer is in shares, may look equally unappealing, however. Granada is that most unfashionable of companies, a conglomerate. Doubts about its strategy have considerably damaged Granada's share price since the bid was launched. If Forte shareholders extract too high a price from Granada, there will be nothing left for Mr Robinson and the deal becomes pointless.

Granada could probably withdraw gracefully – which is what leaving the present offer

on the table would amount to – without serious damage to its reputation or that of its chief executive. The bid costs so far, £35m, are a lot to throw down the drain but they are nothing against the likely costs of over-paying. Mr Robinson will wait to see the final defence before making up his mind, but he must already be aware that it's a tough call.

It seems doubtful that such a policy would survive the transition from opposition into government. For a start, it would put policy in Britain at odds with that of Europe, where the need is to show only that a merger above a certain size does not harm competition. Demonstrating future benefit would also be a highly subjective thing, making merger decisions the object of whim and favour.

Nonetheless, a much tougher stance on takeovers and mergers seems highly likely. It may well be that the present Government pre-empted Labour by altering its stance ahead of the election. There are, after all, few votes in allowing through big job-shedding mergers without any kind of independent investigation.

Already there are straws in the wind. The two generator bids for electricity distribution companies would almost certainly have escaped without reference under Michael Heseltine.

The "anything goes" policy in operation when he was President of the Board of Trade in any case looks to have been a flawed one. What little academic research has been done on these matters indicates that very few mergers yield much long-term benefit, either to shareholders in the bidding company or more generally.

Nor is the creation of yet larger and larger "national champions", some of them with near-monopolies of their domestic markets, necessarily something that should be encour-

aged. In an increasingly global, cost-conscious and competitive economy, the high-is-beautiful corporate philosophy has enjoyed a new lease of life.

Yet the fact remains that it never seems to have done Britain any good. A higher proportion of GDP is already accounted for in Britain by large companies than almost any other developed economy. It is in the small to medium-sized sectors that Britain is weakest. This is where more successful economies such as Germany and Japan have outlasted us. Britain has its fair share of "world-class" companies, but in the second and third tiers down, the companies that aspire to world class, Britain's showing is poor. This may have something to do with the takeover culture that rules here.

In Britain the entrepreneurial dream is to make your pile as rapidly as possible, set up and retire to the country with the Lahrads. Not so in Germany where companies are much more commonly kept in the family and passed from one generation to the next.

For the time being the takeover culture, deliberately encouraged by Government policy and the City, remains supreme. But things are changing, not just among policy-makers, but among long-term institutional shareholders, too.

Many of them are a good deal more sceptical about the supposed benefits of mergers than they were. Those who want to take advantage of the present liberal environment had better move fast: the gates are closing.

Gates closing on the empire-builders

It looks as though 1996 is set to be another boom year for takeovers with little sign of the present hectic pace of activity abating. Financial services, pharmaceuticals, brewing and the media should continue to generate a steady flow of mergers and acquisitions.

In part, the motor for the present wave of activity is the prospect of a Labour government. Many chief executives see next year as a last chance for getting the big, empire-building acquisition through the competition authorities – particularly if it involves rationalisation and job losses, as most of them do these days.

As it stands, Labour policy on mergers would be to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission virtually any acquisition of size. The onus would then be on the bidder not merely to show that the merger is not against the public interest (the present burden of proof) but to demonstrate that positive benefits would flow from it, too.

Banking shake-up: Tugwell negotiates £1m-plus package as head of newly merged American operation

Top Natwest director quits for US job

JOHN WILLCOCK
Financial Correspondent

John Tugwell, NatWest's £1.4m a year highest-paid director, has resigned to join the company that is buying the British bank's New Jersey subsidiary.

He is negotiating a £1m-plus a year package to be chairman and chief executive of Fleet National Bank of New York.

Mr Tugwell has been NatWest's best-paid executive for several years, and his three year rolling contract with Bancorp could have netted him a huge pay-off if he had left.

But staying on as chairman and chief executive of the newly-merged operation is expected to be a lucrative career move for a banker who nar-

rowly lost to Derek Wanless three years ago in the race to become chief executive of the whole NatWest Group.

The Bancorp acquisition means that Fleet will double in size to become America's tenth largest bank. The £2bn transaction is scheduled to be completed by May, and Mr Tugwell is understood to be negotiating a new contract.

According to NatWest sources yesterday, Mr Tugwell always said that he would stay with Bancorp when he left London to turn around what was then an ailing subsidiary at the start of the 1990s.

His success in pulling NatWest out of the mire in the US has brought him rewards that far exceeded the remuneration of directors who



John Tugwell: Highest-paid director at NatWest

salary measured against his US rather than UK banking equivalents, and he has done far better than Mr Wanless in remuneration terms. In 1994, for instance, Mr Tugwell received a total of nearly £2m – while Mr Wanless managed roughly a quarter of that.

NatWest began its ill-fated expansion into US retail banking in 1979, but by 1991 Bancorp had accumulated \$1bn of losses on property loans. By 1992 Mr Tugwell had returned the bank to profit, and then added two acquisitions.

The merger mania which seized American retail banking last year following cross-state deregulation posed a dilemma for NatWest to spend heavily and expand, or to sell up. The bank continued last September

that it had chosen the latter course, not least because of soaring US bank stock prices, and analysts expected the price to be at least two times book value, or over \$4bn.

American accounting rules however meant that the sale of an overseas owned operation forced a write-off of the goodwill, which brought the price down to \$3.16bn.

This was still way ahead of the \$1bn valuation put on Bancorp four years ago, and the City viewed this as testifying to Mr Tugwell's success in reversing its fortunes.

While Mr Tugwell, 54, prepares for a new career as a senior US banker, the NatWest board is pondering how best to spend the proceeds of the Bancorp sale, which will release

£1bn of capital. It is keen to expand in investment banking and fund management. In this context a whole series of potential candidates have been linked with NatWest – including Legal & General, Friends Provident, Mercury Asset Management and Schroders.

NatWest has consistently refused to comment on all such market speculation.

However, the bank is not ruling out a 100m share buy back scheme along the lines of a similar one undertaken by Barclays Bank last year.

Some analysts would prefer NatWest to follow this route, seeing UK banks as heavily over-capitalised – and with a relatively poor history of expansion into non-retail areas.

IN BRIEF

Russia to start diamond exchange

Russian authorities will launch an exchange in January for uncut and polished diamonds, with De Beers Consolidated Mines under consideration as a possible co-founder, said Ararat Evoyan, the head of the Russian association of diamond producers. Other likely co-founders are the finance ministry and state committee on precious metals. Fresh talks with De Beers will be held early in the new year.

Two-year dispute ends at Tate & Lyle

A two and a half year union dispute has ended at one of Tate & Lyle's US plants after workers voted to accept the company's contract proposals. The vote ends the lock-out of more than 700 workers at the sugar group's AE Staley plant in Decatur, Illinois. Tate & Lyle now expects work to return to normal by the end of January. The dispute began in 1992 when the company introduced sub-contracting work and 12 hour rotating shifts. Workers then refused to sign individual contracts.

NEC expands mobile phone operations

NEC, the Japanese electronics group, is to expand its UK mobile phone operations, doubling its manufacturing capacity to 100,000 units and taking on another 50 staff at its research and development centre. The move is part of NEC's strategy of localising mobile phone production at its plants in the UK, Mexico, Australia and China by 1997.

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business

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN
Edited by Magnus Grimond

New venture trust is only for the brave

Yorkshire Fund Managers and Equity Ventures of Bristol appear to be putting before experience in pushing ahead with plans to raise £15m for the British Venture Capital Trust, the latest offering in the venture capital trust stable.

For despite two years of gestation, VCTs have not been the runaway success the Treasury had hoped. Launched by Kenneth Clarke in his first Budget in November 1993, it was hoped VCTs would ease the birth of the enterprise investment scheme, a system of investment tax breaks designed to replace the business expansion scheme. But Mr Clarke's hopes for the new trusts would ease the birth of the enterprise investment scheme, a system of investment tax breaks designed to replace the business expansion scheme. But Mr Clarke's hopes for the new trusts would ease the birth of the enterprise investment scheme, a system of investment tax breaks designed to replace the business expansion scheme.

The latest launch, planned for February, follows last week's news that Friends Provident had pulled its offering because it could not attract the planned £10m in subscriptions. Even the more successful trusts have not had an easy time. Murray Johnston, which has a strong track record, could raise only £18.4m of the £31.5m originally

intended for its VCT in September. The shares were launched at 100p, briefly hit a high of 105p, and have now slumped to 93p.

Northern Venture Trust, a fund with a regional flavour run by Newcastle-based Northern Venture Managers, had better luck in October, raising most of its planned £15m. But the shares, also placed at 100p, have fared little better than the Murray VCT and now stand at 95p. It has been a similar story for Baroness, which floated its VCT in the same month and has seen the price slide from 100p to 96p.

The prospect of extensive tax breaks has clearly not yet proved of sufficient attraction to the wealthier investors who are the main targets of VCTs. For those with up to £100,000 to put at risk for five years, the trusts offer income tax relief at 20 per cent on the initial investment, the ability to defer tax on existing capital gains and a potential stream of tax-free returns from the underlying investments. After the bad press surrounding losses from the original BES and the

volatile fortunes of smaller companies, many investors will be well aware of that they should be prepared to lose their shirts. Baroness and British Venture Managers will attempt to minimise the risks by investing only in established businesses.

The new trust is offering a yield of 3.2 per cent in its first year, which the company claims is equivalent to a gross return of 16.7 per cent after all tax reliefs. Like others, it is also holding out the prospect of distributing any realised capital gains as tax-free dividends. Even so, this one is only for the brave.

Russia is still hostile

Russia remains a hostile environment for most Western investors. The Russian mafia plays fast and loose with the rules, while the austerity, poverty and chaotic structures left over from the collapse of the

planned economy all make life difficult for the market economy.

Outside investors were concerned over the recent parliamentary elections which made the former Communists the biggest single party. Political developments seemed to be behind the recent decision by Stet, the Italian telecommunications company, to pull out of a deal to invest in a new Russian telecom group.

Political risks remain. But the situation is less dire than two years ago. Inflation has come down this year from 17 per cent a month to less than 5 per cent, and although the Russian stock market has fallen 30 per cent in the past year, there is a nucleus of about 50 stocks which are actively traded. They include Lukoil, an oil company with 15bn barrels of reserves, Unified Energy (utilities), Mosenergo (Moscow power company), GAZ (Gorki cars), Red October (chocolates), and a raft of shipping, paper and resources companies.

A few hardy investors are already operating here, on the grounds that mistakes can be made relatively cheaply, and valuable contacts and

experience gained. Pictet has a specialised fund, First Russian Frontiers, whose declining share price graphically illustrates the risks.

Framlington operates a Russian Investment Fund, which invests in Russian companies already in partnership with western groups. Determined private investors who want a direct punt should also take a look at JKC Oil & Gas, currently looking for oil in the south-west of Russia, and Bakyrchik Gold, which is appraising gold prospects in the central Asian region.

Gem of a year for Goldsmiths

Goldsmiths, the fast expanding jewellery chain run by Jurk Piasecki, has been the gem of the sector this year. In April the company announced doubled profits of £3m. New stores, better systems and a couple of small acquisitions have boosted the group, which has been



well positioned to take advantage of the problems at Sigenet, the former Ratners business which controls H Samuel and Ernest Jones stores.

The shares have mirrored the trading, rising by 50 per cent this year to 227p, up another 2p yesterday.

The good news continued with yesterday's bullish Christmas trading statement. Like-for-like sales rose by 8.7 per cent in the month before Christmas, compared with a very strong December last year. Sales for the 13 months to December were up by a healthy 7.7 per cent. The concession opened in Harrods this year is also trading well.

Goldsmiths built its reputation on watches, which account for around 50 per cent of sales. It has tied up distribution agreements with Rolex, Cartier and Gucci, but is now looking to expand its non-watch business.

The plan is to add a further 8 outlets next year to the existing chain of 119. It has also declared its interest in buying H Samuel and Ernest Jones from Sigenet, although it has been rebuffed so far.

The company's broker ABN Amro House Cowart upgraded its full-year profit forecast to £4.25m yesterday. That puts the shares on a forward rating of 16. About right.

Simon Pincombe
CITY DIARY

Getting a kick out of a call box

BT shareholders can return to the seasonal glutony with an easy mind. The telecommunications giant is confident that the latest spate of vandalism to its public telephones will not develop into a national trend. Neither, as has been privately suggested, will it necessitate an immediate redesign of the humble payphone (at great cost to the company).

The "few isolated incidents" of phone abuse appear to have their origin in the Leicester area. A mindless sub-culture has taken great delight in delivering a sharp kick to the doors of BT payphones when someone is making a call. Executed properly the blow jams the door, trapping the helpless caller for hours on end (it's at times like this when you discover that you don't have the right change).

For the technically minded the problem results from the steel frame of the payphone door being forced over the rubber trim. Once this has happened the caller can not then generate enough force from the inside to reverse the process.

"It is not a design fault," a BT spokeswoman assures us. "But it is obviously a factor that will be taken into account for the next redesign. These are extremely rare incidents and it does require huge force to block the door - a sustained and deliberate vandal attack."

Payphones were last redesigned in 1985. Are we about to witness the rebirth of the sturdy red callbox?

A Christmas card from Patrick Minford offers a rare glimpse into the obsessive mind of one of the Chancellor's "wise persons". Not

Alie in the mail is not the sort of concept you would expect to appeal to the sophisticated woman. But it has been going down a storm in the US this Christmas. A decision by America's mail order beer clubs to place ads in magazines such as Vogue proved inspired - sales of special brand beers rocketed as wives and girlfriends grasped at a sexy alternative to socks and ties for presents. "I'd say 75 per cent of our customers right now are women," claims Todd Holmes, a 28-year-old former estate agent who runs Beer Across America, the country's largest mail order beer club. For \$15.95 a month an American woman can buy her mind two respects of unusual beers - something like Hurricane Lager from Miami or Houkies Ale from Chicago.

On reflection the socks sound like a good deal.



Under attack: A crafty kick can trap a caller for hours

content with a traditional misfire garnished with sprigs of holly, Prof Minford and "his berserkers" at the Liverpool research group in macroeconomics have seized the opportunity to indulge in some crystal ball gazing. In short, Prof Minford's Christmas card is little more than an economic forecast masquerading as a seasonal greeting. So what's up in '96?

In February the UK will dip into a mild recession. Inflation will drop below 1 per cent and there will be a Tory backlash rebellion over inadequate interest rate cuts.

European tension on monetary union will be resolved in April by postponing the starting date.

In August the economic slowdown will have sufficiently undermined tax cut hopes for the November budget to put pressure on Ken Clarke to resign. And in November Bob Dole will replace Bill Clinton in the White House.

That should sit well on the Number 11 mantelpiece.

Pemberstone buys property trusts

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Investors are being offered cash and shares, allowing them either to realise their investments or shelter their existing BES capital gains by taking up the shares.

The roll-over option is available because Pemberstone was itself a BES company. The new shares are being offered at 66p, which compares with the 60p at which the company raised £6.75m through a placing when it came to the stock market in September.

Capital Ventures, a subsidiary of Pemberstone, sponsored the BES prospectuses for all the Roman companies. Since 1991 another subsidiary, CIM, has handled the financial and property management of the three businesses. Cheshunt, the property agents, has valued the property assets at a combined value of £11.2m.

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SELECT	£50,000+	3.10%	2.33%
	£25,000+	2.90%	2.18%
	£10,000+	2.40%	1.80%
	£5,000+	2.10%	1.58%
	£2,000+	1.85%	1.39%
	£500+	0.25%	0.19%
	£1+	0.20%	0.15%

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SPECIAL MONTHLY INCOME (††)	£50,000+	3.06%	2.29%
	£25,000+	2.86%	2.15%
	£10,000+	2.37%	1.78%
	£5,000+	2.08%	1.56%
	£2,000+	1.83%	1.38%
	£500+	0.25%	0.19%
	£1+	0.20%	0.15%

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PREMIER SAVER	£100,000+	5.10%	3.83%
	£50,000+	4.95%	3.71%
	£25,000+	4.80%	3.60%
	£10,000+	4.50%	3.38%
	£5,000+	4.05%	3.04%
	£2,000+	3.70%	2.78%
	£1,000+	3.55%	2.66%
	£500	2.55%	1.91%

(1-6 Withdrawals)	£100,000+	4.10%	3.08%
	£50,000+	3.95%	2.96%
	£25,000+	3.80%	2.85%
	£10,000+	3.50%	2.63%
	£5,000+	3.05%	2.29%
	£2,000+	2.70%	2.03%
	£1,000+	2.55%	1.91%
	£500	1.55%	1.16%

(More than 6 Withdrawals)	£100,000+	3.10%	2.33%
	£50,000+	3.10%	2.33%
	£25,000+	2.90%	2.18%
	£10,000+	2.40%	1.80%
	£5,000+	2.10%	1.58%
	£2,000+	1.85%	1.39%
	£1,000+	0.25%	0.19%
	£500	0.25%	0.19%

PREMIER PLUS CAPITAL ISSUE 1	£100,000+	5.40%	4.05%
	£50,000+	5.30%	3.98%
	£25,000+	5.05%	3.79%
	£10,000+	4.50%	3.38%
	£5,000+	3.60%	2.70%
	£2,000+	3.30%	2.48%
	£500+	3.25%	2.44%

PREMIER PLUS MONTHLY INCOME ISSUE 1 (††)	£100,000+	5.27%	3.95%
	£50,000+	5.18%	3.88%
	£25,000+	4.94%	3.70%
	£10,000+	4.41%	3.31%
	£5,000+	3.54%	2.66%
	£2,000+	3.25%	2.44%
	£500+	3.20%	2.40%

PREMIER OPTION BOND	£100,000+	6.30%	4.73%
	£50,000+	6.05%	4.54%
	£25,000+	5.75%	4.31%
	£5,000+	5.50%	4.13%

PREMIER OPTION BOND (††)	£100,000+	6.13%	4.59%
	£50,000+	5.89%	4.42%
	£25,000+	5.60%	4.20%
	£5,000+	5.37%	4.02%

PREMIER OPTION BOND (†)	£100,000+	6.90%	5.18%
	£50,000+	6.80%	5.10%
	£25,000+	6.75%	5.06%
	£5,000+	6.70%	5.03%

PREMIER OPTION BOND (†)	£100,000+	6.69%	5.02%
	£50,000+	6.60%	4.95%
	£25,000+	6.55%	4.91%
	£5,000+	6.50%	4.88%

TESSA PLUS	£3,000+	6.10%	
	£500+	4.60%	
	£1+	1.00%	

A 5 year savings account with tax free interest and a special bonus interest payment of 2% on the first year's savings on maturity.

PREMIER TESSA	£9,000+	6.70%	
	£5,000+	6.40%	
	£3,000+	6.40%	
	£500+	4.60%	
	£1+	0.35%	

TESSA designed for savers whose original TESSA has matured.

PREMIER RESERVE BOND	£1,000+	6.50%	
	£1+	0.35%	

(Available from 01/01/96) A Follow-Up TESSA designed for savers whose original TESSA has matured.

BONUS TESSA	£3,000+	5.05%	
	£500+	3.55%	
	£1+	0.50%	

(Not available for new investors from 01/01/96) A 5 year savings account with tax free interest and a guaranteed interest bonus on maturity.

THE CHILDREN'S ACCOUNT	£1+	2.45%	1.84%
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The instant access account for children under 14 years of age.

CHARITY ACCOUNT (††)	£1+	3.10%	2.33%
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Withdrawals available on instant access.

OEPOSIT ACCOUNT (††)	£1+	0.60%	0.45%
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Special OEPOSIT ACCOUNT (††)

SAVINGS SHARES	£1+	0.55%	0.41%
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(No longer available) Rates also apply to Cheshunt Regular Monthly Savings.

SECURE INVESTMENT ACCOUNT	£2,000+	8.20%	6.15%
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ISSUE 3

SECURE INVESTMENT ACCOUNT	£2,000+	7.00%	5.25%
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ISSUE 4

FULLY PAID SHARE	£50,000+	3.06%	2.29%
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Interest paid six monthly. Rates also apply to Cheshunt Investment Share, Cheshunt Clubs, Cheshunt Ex Thrift and Cheshunt Subscription Share. (No longer available).

BONUS INTEREST BOND ISSUES	£25,000+	5.50%	4.13%
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BONUS RETURN BOND ISSUES 1 & 2

	£10,000+	5.15%	3.86%
	£5,000+	4.70%	3.53%

(No longer available) 12 month Bond account with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS BOND (Issue 2)	£250,000+	5.95%	4.46%
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond account with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£250,000+	5.79%	4.35%
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£100,000+	5.70%	4.27%
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£50,000+	5.60%	4.20%
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£25,000+	5.37%	4.02%
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£10,000+	5.03%	3.77%
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£5,000+	4.73%	3.53%
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£1,000+	4.45%	3.34%
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£500+	4.15%	3.11%
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£1+	3.15%	2.36%
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£1+	2.75%	2.06%
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£1+	0.20%	0.15%
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£1+	5.35%	
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

BONUS INCOME BOND Issue 2 (††)	£1+		
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(No longer available) 12 month Bond with added Loyalty Interest Bonus of 0.25% gross pa on renewal in 1st and 2nd year.

sport

FACES FOR '96: Two young sportsmen are at the vanguard of emerging British talent



The writing is on the wall for Danny Williams, the formidable young heavyweight from the mean streets of south London

Photograph: Robert Hallam

Brixton's pearl on the brink

At night Danny Williams winds his way carefully through the flats near Brixton Prison, enters Brockwell Park by the school and runs three times round the silent grounds, passing the secret windows of a thousand council houses, the distant parade of shabby stores at Herne Hill, before heading back towards the glow of Brixton's lights. When Williams, 22, 16st 11lb and 6ft 2in, runs, the street life wandering the park's dimly lit corners pauses.

As a child he walked the same route on his way to the gym above the Half Moon at Herne Hill. He was big then, big and lazy. Williams often missed training and it was hard to watch him because of his size; slowly his flesh turned hard and men at his new club, the Lynn near Camberwell Green, started to get very excited. However, in the domestic championship he failed on four occasions but the na-

donal coach, Ian Irwin, tucked away with his formulas and ideas behind closed doors at Crystal Palace, developed the fighter's natural jab and took him to tournaments all over the world. Williams fought 19 times for England, losing just four bouts, won gold at various events and bronze at the European and Commonwealth Games.

Since 1992, bawlers from the professional business have shown an interest, but once the sweet promises started they were broken. Yet still the assistant dreamers showed up at Williams' door to stake bold claims. Boxing has too many wise guys, experts who pray on innocent amateurs, and Williams met them all. Frank Warren watched the situation from a safe distance, knowing that Williams wanted to box in Atlanta next year. But finally in September, after Williams decided that the dote and amateur boxing's

James Reed on a heavyweight with shoulders broad enough to bear the acclaim

politics were not conducive to podium strolling, a deal was done. "Danny has the speed, the power and skill to become a very wealthy man, because he is a very dangerous man," Warren warned.

In 1994 Williams demonstrated just how dangerous he can be when he met the English amateur champion, Danny Watts, in the final of the Liverpool Multi-nations Tournament. The bout was an unofficial box-off for a place in England's Commonwealth Games squad. It lasted 32 seconds: one left hook put

Watts down and out. Silence greeted his fall because he was the favourite. "I didn't enjoy it. Danny is a friend of mine," said Williams as he cast a casual glance at Watts who was changing right next to him. "It was me or him." It was a perfect punch, smooth, accurate and quick. Not the work of a 20-year-old boy.

Part of the problem when Williams was an amateur was his weight. For three years he tried to compete at heavyweight – the equivalent of the professional cruiserweight division – before moving up to super-heavyweight, or professional heavyweight, just a few months before beating Watts. There were several occasions when Williams was stuck in a sauna to lose excess pounds.

Williams has now boxed twice as a professional. On both occasions he beat men who accepted the fight knowing they would probably lose.

However, he added both contests with style by using simple tactics, basic punches and staying calm. Williams has more poise at this stage of his career than Lennox Lewis, who cutted and napped up the way past a variety of domestic opponents, or Frank Bruno, who sent dozens of foreign performers helter-skeltering to early showers at the start of his career after most had simply wandered into the dreaded slipstream of one of big Frank's swings. Williams is also bigger than either Bruno or Lewis were at 22.

In his last fight against Joey Paladino, at York Hall, earlier this month, Williams stood patiently as Paladino climbed up from two false counts before he ended it with just a few seconds left in the first round. "These guys are big and, if they get a few rounds, all of their experience starts to show," Williams said.

He is right. This year

Williams will test his concentration against the resistance of 10 or 12 more boxers. He can win every fight but his mind must remain focused – young boxers always lose outside the ring. Williams is the first to acknowledge he has just started to learn and now has to show people he is listening. "I have respect now," he insists.

Williams knows he can gain an even higher level of respect if he becomes regarded as Brixton's black heavyweight prospect. Williams has lived in Brixton all his life and he has seen it change. Other things have changed and there was a time when black people stayed away from fights. However, Nigel Burt started to alter the shade of fight audiences, and now Naseem Hamed has introduced even more shades to the once all-white arena. Hopefully it will continue changing. Williams is the great black hope, and the kid knows it.

Butcher cuts opponents to the quick

It is tempting to think that Mark Butcher was always destined for something special, after his historic debut for Surrey against Glamorgan in a Sunday League match four years ago. His father, Alan, was captain of the Glamorgan side when the then 19-year-old Butcher knocked 48 runs off his old man's attack and took Surrey to within four runs of victory. The pair became the first father and son to play against each other in any sort of match between two first-class counties.

The young pup Mark certainly has the breeding. His father began his career with Surrey, won an England cap and then switched to Glamorgan before turning coach at Essex; uncle Ian played first-class cricket for Leicestershire and Gloucestershire; and Mark's brother, Gary, the youngest of the litter, is on the Glamorgan playing staff.

Mind you, he could have ended up as a rock star. "I flirted briefly with showbusiness," he confesses. "I was in a band. I sang and played lead guitar. We played our own stuff, a bit of rhythm and blues, funk and that sort of thing. But really I was always going to play cricket."

Butcher certainly has the ambition to match the pedigree and the talent. "I want to become an England player," Butcher says. "I want it badly. I like watching England on the TV, but I'd rather be doing it."

What exactly he would do for England is a moot point. A pointer can be gleaned from his musical dalliance, where he did more than one thing. So it is with his cricket. The clean-striking left-handed bat opens the Surrey innings with Darren Bicknell, but he can also bowl – right-arm seam at a fairly sharp lick, with a useful away swinger in the arm.

"I want to go for the England all-rounder's spot," he says without a flicker. "It seems to me there is room for a middle order all-rounder. Look at South Africa. They have Brian McMillan coming in at No 6 and he is also bowling 15 or so overs in a day. That is what England need."

"In a relatively short space of time in my career I have batted pretty well everywhere and that sets you up in steady, and once you have an opening an innings I think you can bat anywhere."

On last season's Surrey Butcher's credentials as an all-rounder are somewhat dubious, however. He had begun the 1994 season as a member of the Surrey attack, but injury intervened. On his return, Butcher became the umpire's partner for Bicknell, hit his maiden first-class hundred and a couple of fifties, and his role was sorted. The bowling took a back seat.

Two subsequent operations (hernia repair followed by a pelvic operation) did not help his cause, throwing Butcher's bowling out of kilter for much of last season. Surrey and Butcher suffered. At least he had his batting to fall back on.

Butcher's switch to opening the Surrey innings has resulted in a glorious surge of self-confidence; last summer he passed 1,000 runs in his first full season for the county, including a cascade of half centuries and a couple of hundreds, including a career-best 167.

CRICKET

David Llewellyn finds the versatile Surrey opener has his sights on an England place

Butcher, though, is not satisfied. "I should, as a pro, have turned at least half my fifties last summer into hundreds," he says harshly. "If I had had a ratio of five tens to seven fifties I would probably have had a better shout of getting on to a tour. Fifties don't tend to raise people's eyebrows quite as much as the 10s hundreds."

However, it is his bowling that concerns him, and since the end of the season Butcher has been working hard on it. He says of the 1995 season: "I had not had any time, pre-season, to put in a great deal of work in the nets, so last summer I was in this crazy situation where one day I would go out and bowl OK and the very next day I would bowl a complete load of crap. But this winter has been different. I have no injuries and have been making sure I do as much bowling as possible. It's something



Butcher: battling back

I enjoy doing. It keeps me involved in the game."

Butcher is now trying to master the in-swing with the help of an Ian Botham video. "I still can't work out how he does it," confesses Butcher with a laugh, "but I'm working on it."

So he has the application necessary to succeed. How about the temperament?

"People can needle me a bit – mainly, though, when I am batting," he says.

Butcher's girlfriend of four years, Judy – sister of the Surrey captain, Alec Stewart – does. "She has been a great help to me," Butcher admits. "She has made me realise that this is what I want to do. She has made me realise that I could be a lot better than I am. She gives me a good kick up the ass."

It may not be long before Butcher is kicking international batsmen on behalf of his country.

Man holds off Master in market

As he was completing the near 300-mile return trip home to Cumbria from Kempton, One Man was already being installed as favourite for the rescheduled King George VI Chase at Sandown on 6 January.

The grey, 2-1 favourite for the big race with William Hill before yesterday's abandonment, is now quoted at 13-8 by the same firm for the re-arranged race despite the likely addition of Master Oats to the field. He is 5-2 with Coral.

All bets on the contest became void and stakes refunded yesterday when a second attempt to stage the race a day late at Kempton was predictably abandoned because of frost.

As a result, the bookmakers formed a new market on the race which is open to all original entrants, including Master Oats and Young Hustler, who would not have run at Kempton. One Man, to be ridden by Richard Dunwoody at Sand-

down, will head a field likely to contain all the principal contenders. Only Book Of Music and Egypt Mill Prince are considered to be doubtful.

William Hill's spokesman, David Hood, said: "The King George at Sandown now puts more emphasis on jumping. Master Oats and Young Hustler are significant additions to the race while the extra 10 days allows Brief Gale to recover from her knock."

Pat Flynn is attempting to get Monteludo back to Ireland for tomorrow's Christmas Hurdle at Leopardstown after his abortive trip to Kempton. Last night the gelding was still stranded in Britain.

King George VI Chase (Sandown, 6 January) Odds: 5-2 One Man, 4-1 Barton Bank, Master Oats, 5-1 Merry Gale, 10-1 Val D'Aren, 12-1 Duke Of York, Young Hustler, 14-1 Algon, 20-1 Book Of Music, Brief Gale, Countess, 25-1 others.

Racing's hopes lie on sand

The British Horseracing Board yesterday moved to guarantee racecourse action in Britain this Saturday afternoon by sanctioning an extra all-weather fixture at Wolverhampton. The track is already hosting an evening meeting that day but will now stage a six-race card beginning at 12.55pm and ending at 3.25pm before racing resumes under floodlights at 7pm.

Today is the third successive blank day for racing, and tomorrow's fixtures are also likely to succumb to the weather. The BHB has approved two new races, both limited handicaps, for Cheltenham on Monday designed to attract horses that would have run in Kempton's Christmas Hurdle and Wetherby's Castleford Chase.

However, the Welsh National will not be transferred to Newbury on Saturday as that card is also likely to be abandoned.

Pennekamp's heir proves elusive

Where is France's successor to Arazi, Pennekamp or Zafonic, a two-year-old to enter the list of British trainers by threatening to sweep aside the best from this side of the Channel in the Classic races next year? Well hidden is the most charitable answer. The 1995 Flat season was uncomfortable for the French. Vettori and Celtic Swing flew in from Britain and made off with their 2,000 Guineas and Derby, while their top mile event, the Prix du Moulin, fell to Ireland's Ridgewood Pearl.

Then at Longchamp in October, Hever Golf Rose and Lantarras made it a British benefit day in the Prix de l'Abbaye and the Arc, and, unusually, there were few Gallic cheers at the breeders' Cup. Worst of all, there was no substantial evidence that the French will be any stronger next year. No star came to light in the shape of a Zafonic, or even a Machiavellian or Hector Protector. The publication next week of the International Classification – racing's end-of-

year report – is likely to compound the gloom across the Channel by confirming a hard figures that the best French two-year-olds are not within half a stone of the pick of the British, Royal Applause and Alhaarth.

The evidence is hard to ignore as the British-trained Tagula, Lord Of Men and Polaris Flight, beat most of the top French juveniles in three of their most important events, the Prix Morny, Prix de la Salamandre and Critérium de Saint-Cloud.

In looking for a reason for France's inability to prevent this exportation of prize-money, the death early last year of François Boutin, a masterly trainer of juveniles, stands out. But there was also an unusual scarcity of young recruits from

Neil Young on the death of young talent to defend France's top races

André Fabre's stable in the colours of Sheikh Mohammed to follow in the footsteps of Lyclus, Zieten, Lion Cavern and Pennekamp. With the Sheikh sending so many that show promise to join his Godolphin team, Fabre may benefit from holding on to his cards.

The only runners to appeal from this camp were lightly raced sons kept away from the top races, namely the Deauville runner-up West Memphis, and Polar Lights, successful in a hot Saudi-Cloud two-year.

Fabre's Daniel Wildenstein-owned juveniles were much more prominent, and their Miss Tahiti is probably the best French prospect for 1996. She beat a solid international field headed by Shake the Yoke in the Prix Marcel Boussac on Arc weekend, and must be kept at the forefront of calculations for the French Guineas and Oaks. Loup Solitaire completed a rare double for Wildenstein when beating stable-mate Maminax in the Grand Critérium. He has been spoken of as an Epsom contender but the field in the Critérium – including British maiden winners Comital and Astor Place – finished in a heap, so it is hard to regard the race as highly as in previous years.

The top French colts in the classification should be Fabre's Zafonic, third behind Tagula in the Morny, and Stavos Naxos, who finished fourth in the Salamandre behind winning two backdoor Group Three events. He may have less scope for improvement than stable-mate Spinning World, and the Aga Khan's Assistant, lightly raced colts who also picked up late autumn pattern races.

Jonathan Pease, trainer of Titus Libus and Spinning World, should have an excellent year. He has high hopes of the maiden filles Snowboat and Clea De Feu and handles the precocious Widd Fassion, second in the Morny and the Salamandre, and Contare, whose demolition of a decent field of maidens at Deauville in August was one of the most promising performances of 1995.

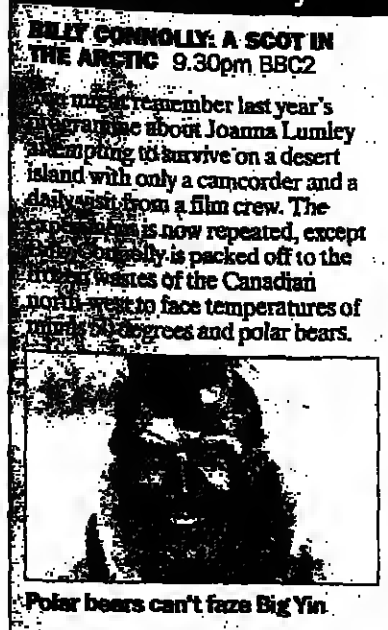
But they bear a heavy burden to achieve and progress needs to be turned into progress if they are to make successful forays to Britain – even defend their own turf.

THE TOP FRENCH TWO-YEAR-OLDS OF 1995

111 Miss Tahiti	106 Loup Solitaire, Maminax	102 Restless Carl
110 Barroade, Titus Libus	105 Shining Molly	101 Alhaarth, Maminax, Zafonic
109 With Fascination	104 Liberty Range, Le Miro, Occidentale, Staminax	100 Anyday, Oak Hill, Uppa Watta
108 Supreme Commander	103 Spinning World	99 Zafonic, Maminax, West Memphis
107 Contare, Le Miroir, Mabinou	102 General Alan, Mabinou	98 Zafonic, Maminax, West Memphis

today's television & radio

pick of the day



Polar bears can't face Big Yin

Say what you like about Nick Broomfield, the permanently bemused filmmaker, but you always know where you are with him: usually in a car, driving along a freeway, portentous strings playing on the soundtrack, and him on the car-phone being turned down for an interview with the subject of his film, **Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam** (BBC2) began like this, a sequence familiar to those who have got to know his work over the years. Work in which he made much mileage (and a great deal of footage) not managing to land audiences with Eugene Terreblanche and Margaret Thatcher. Now Heidi Fleiss, pander to the stars, a woman who maintains on publicity, was avoiding him. Such is his growing lack of success, you feel it is only a matter of time before he fails to interview Michael Winner.

There is something refreshingly honest about this approach of Broomfield's, though. Almost every other documentary-maker pretends to have greater access than he does, and here a man cheerfully revealing how far outside he is. Besides, how close would you want to be to the

review
Jim White

people he was profiling here? Fleiss, a woman blessed with all the privileges a background could provide, had been drawn into a world so sordid it made you weep: beautiful girls, motivated solely by money, being manipulated by sadists to satisfy appetites jaded by excess.

"I used to be hired by a plastic surgeon to the stars," explained one Fleiss girl Broomfield managed to talk to. "He paid me to sit and watch him light his pipe and freebase on coke. I didn't find it rewarding - I prefer to have a nice meal and an intellectual conversation. Then fool around afterwards." Hookers can't be choosers.

The point about a Broomfield film, however, is that the mechanics of incompetence - the phone-calls, the door-steppings, the rejections - are as enjoyable as any interview. This film was shot through

with lovely moments - Fleiss asking another camera crew their advice as to whether she should accede to Broomfield's demand for an interview, or a madman on the other end of his car phone yelling, "I'm so sick of you. I'm going to call the BBC and tell them I'm being harassed by their members!" or Broomfield asking a hooker on Sunset Boulevard if she knew Heidi, and the hooker, assuming him to be using slang for some obscure sexual practice, shrieking: "What are you on about?"

More than that, though, the bits of business help create the picture of the world Broomfield's quarry moves in. The testimony of a vice-squad policeman, for instance, all moral self-righteousness when he thought he was on the record, was beautifully subverted by the footage which preceded it of him bagging over the fee. And, while another documentary-maker would simply show the home movies of Heidi filmed by her lover, Broomfield explained that he had bought them from the man. Nothing more needed to be said about the contempt with which those within Heidi's orbit treated each other.

The problem with building a picture this way, however, is that it takes a long time. And it wasn't until the end of 90 minutes that you realised that the one question which makes Heidi Fleiss a worthwhile subject for a documentary remained steadfastly unanswered: whose numbers were in her little black client book?

It is good to see that one television Yuletide tradition remains intact. The one in which children are forced to sit down in front of **The Royal Institution Christmas Lectures** (BBC2), in the vain hope that something useful might percolate into the blanchmange that is their telly-overdosed brains. And then James Jackson, in his marvellous introduction to earth sciences for 11-year-olds (just about my level the day after Boxing Day) opens this year's address by saying to his audience of pre-pubescent: "In your lifetime the population of the earth will treble." Is this really the sort of horrifying thought we want to implant in our children's minds? For a moment, the **Power Rangers Christmas Pantomime** looked like harmless fare in comparison.

film of the day



When and about nothing

BBC 1

- 7.00 News, Local News, Weather (4723157).
- 7.30 Toy Symphony (R) (S) (2349515).
- 7.35 Favourite Songs (R) (7263515).
- 8.00 News, Local News, Weather (4076751).
- 8.10 Joe 90 (R) (5808138).
- 8.35 Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles (R) (7061409).
- 9.00 News, Local News, Weather (5137480).
- 9.05 Global Gaze (S) (8263664).
- 9.30 Stone Protectors (R) (89374).
- 10.00 Playdays (S) (5286765).
- 10.25 William's Wish Wellingtons (R) (S) (5192461).
- 10.30 **Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam** (BBC2).
- 10.35 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 10.40 News, Local News, Weather (5137480).
- 10.45 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 10.50 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 10.55 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 11.00 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 11.05 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 11.10 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 11.15 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 11.20 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 11.25 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 11.30 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 11.35 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 11.40 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 11.45 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 11.50 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 11.55 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 12.00 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 12.05 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
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- 12.30 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 12.35 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 12.40 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 12.45 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 12.50 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 12.55 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 1.00 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 1.05 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 1.10 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 1.15 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 1.20 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 1.25 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 1.30 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 1.35 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 1.40 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 1.45 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 1.50 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 1.55 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).
- 2.00 **When and about nothing** (R) (7263515).

BBC 2

- 7.05 **The Great Dictator** (Charles Chaplin 1940 US).
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SPORT

TIGERS ROAST BAA-BAAS

Rugby union's match of the day 21

BRIXTON'S BOXING PEARL

A new sporting face for 1996 20

PREMIERSHIP: Cole goal against his former club sets Ferguson's men on their way as lead is cut to seven points

Rampant United reopen title debate

Manchester United 2
Newcastle United 0

Maybe it was the sight of the black-and-white that inspired him, or perhaps he is a big occasion player after all. Whatever the reason, Andy Cole's rediscovery of his scoring touch at Old Trafford last night, his timing was richly ironic.

Cole's expertly-taken sixth-minute goal was the catalyst for the defeat of his old club, Newcastle United, by his current one, Manchester United. The win, which was sealed by Roy Keane after 52 minutes, breathes life into a championship race that Newcastle were threatening to strangle.

Kevin Keegan's side remain

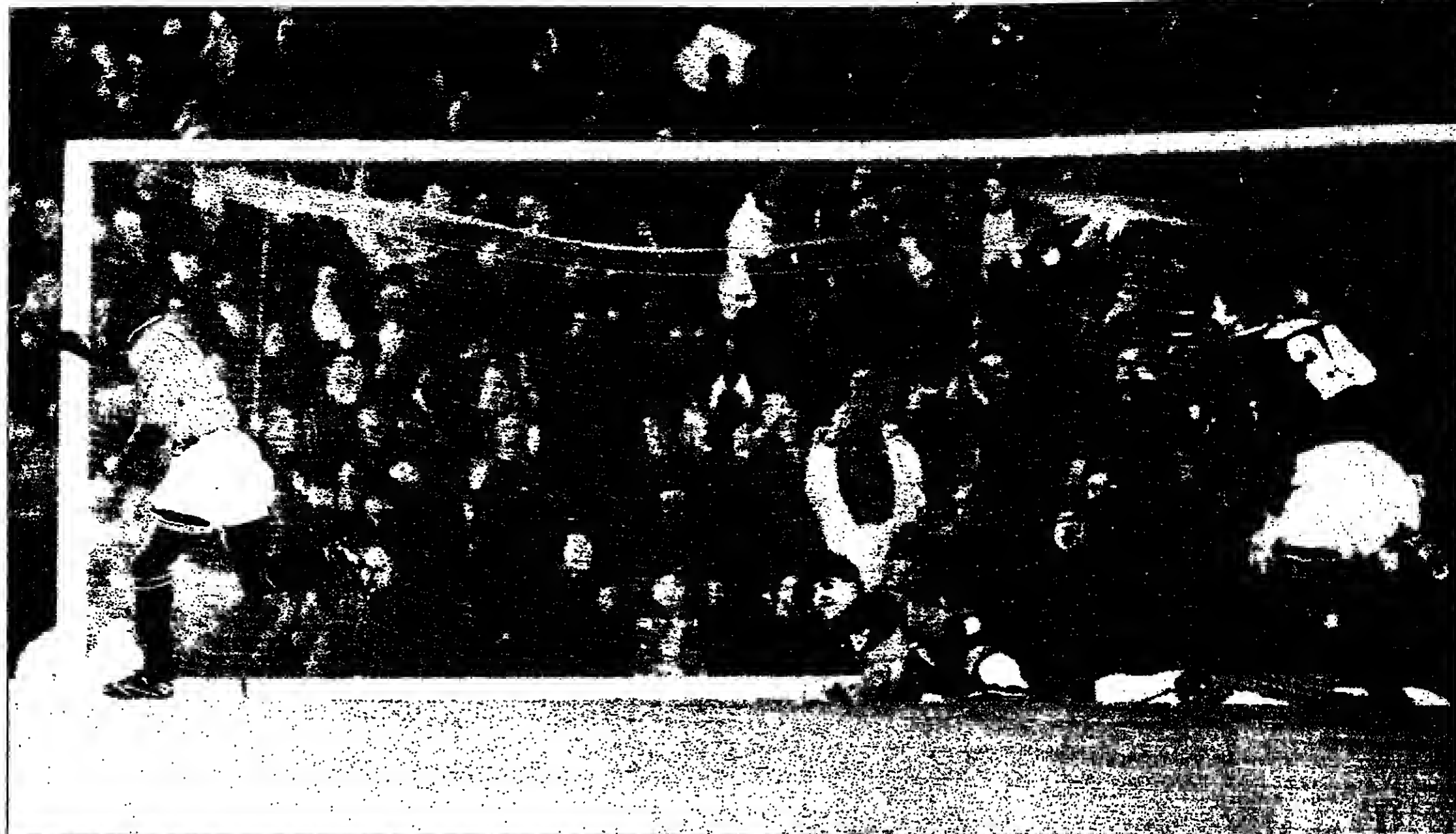
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Manchester United	20	15	3	2	40	18	45
Newcastle United	20	10	5	5	38	22	38

top, but their lead is now a recoverable seven points, not the irretrievable 13, which beckoned yesterday evening.

The circumstances had hardly been ideal for United going into a match of such significance to the championship. They had just endured their worst League run in more than three years, and both their first-choice centre-backs, Steve Bruce and Gary Pallister, and Paul Parker were all ruled out. Alex Ferguson paired Gary Neville and David May in the heart of the defence, with Denis Irwin switching to right-back and Philip Neville operating on the left of the back four.

To increase the tension on a cold night of driving snow, there were contests within game. The French pair, Newcastle's David Ginola and United's Eric Cantona, were meeting in the Premiership for the first time, and Cole and Keith Gillespie, both appearing against their former teams for the first time since swapping clubs.

At least United had Ryan Giggs fit after a foot injury ruled him out of the defeat at Leeds on Sunday, United's fifth game in a row without a win, and the Welsh international demon-



Victory salute: Manchester United's Andy Cole (left) enjoys his moment of triumph after opening the scoring against his former team at Old Trafford last night

Photograph: Ben Radford/Allsport

strated his value after only six minutes.

He launched a swift counter-attack deep into the left of Newcastle's territory, and used a defence-splitting dummy run by Cantona, captain in Bruce's absence, to feed a perfect pass through to Cole on the right

edge of the penalty area. He simply drilled a first-time shot across Pavel Srnicek and inside the far post.

That was just the incentive United needed to put intense pressure on a Newcastle defence that had John Beresford back at left-back in place of the

injured Belgian, Philippe Albert. It had needed a superb cover-tackle from Peacock to deny Keane after Cantona had played the Irishman in, and Keane then tested Srnicek twice more with shots from the edge of the Newcastle box.

Gillespie had little chance to level up his contest with Cole. A fierce challenge by Philip Neville in the 14th minute resulted in the Northern Ireland international being carried off.

Newcastle struggled early on to fulfil their intention to attack, but, with Steve Watson, on for Gillespie, a threat on the right and Ginola more prominent, they began to hold their own. However, Peter Schmeichel, in the United goal, was not troubled until the 28th minute when Steve Howey set Les Ferdinand free. Cole's 25m replacement shot powerfully but the ball deflected off the inside of Schmeichel's leg and away for a corner.

Newcastle were in no mood to launch off a potentially costly error by the referee, Paul Alcock, who booked Warren Barton early on and then showed the yellow card to Beresford. Mistaking him for Barton, he followed it with a red, before realising and apologising to Beresford.

Ferdinand could have lifted Newcastle in the 38th minute, but Gary Neville crowded him out, but the odds seemed to tip

their way when May was carried off just before half-time. Brian McClair replaced him after the interval, with Keane dropping into defence.

United did not see it that way, and eight minutes after the restart they went 2-0 up. Keane, up for a corner that was only half-cleared, arrived in space on the right of the penalty area to meet a diagonal pass by Philip Neville and drive in the second goal.

Keegan sent on Paul Kitson for the last 17 minutes in the hope of opening up a new line of attack, but his side still never looked likely to stave off their third Premiership defeat of the season.

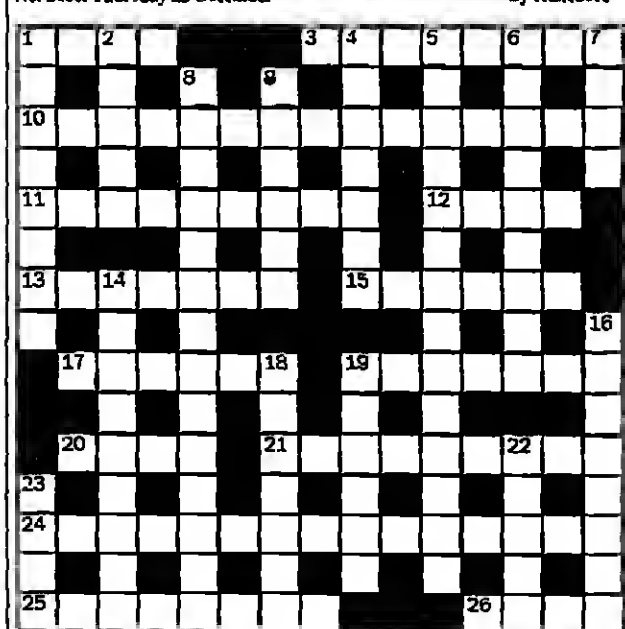
Manchester United: Schmeichel, Irwin, May, McClair, 1-2, G. Howey, P. Neville, Keane, But, Beresford, Giggs, Cole, Cantona, Srnicek, Peacock, not used: McGibbon, Sanders.
Newcastle United: Srnicek, Barton, Peacock, Howey, Beresford, Lee, Clark, Watson, 1-3, Ginola, Beresford, Ferdinand, Gillespie, Watson, 1-5, Substitute not used: Elliott.
Referee: P. Alcock (Redhill, Surrey).

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 2868, Thursday 28 December

By Helene Bore

Thursday's Solution



1. TIPSTAFF
2. SNACK
3. TREASURE
4. PRUNE
5. Y
6. SE
7. ON
8. EARMUFFS
9. ABLE
10. RY
11. E
12. T
13. A
14. P
15. G
16. R
17. K
18. S
19. T
20. I
21. G
22. I
23. A
24. B
25. E
26. T

STILL UNDECIDED...

For all their symbolic significance, the recent history of Premiership games between the top two suggests they will not be crucial in deciding the destiny of the championship.

1994/95
Blackburn 3, Man Utd 4
Man Utd 1, Blackburn 0
Blackburn won title by one point

1995/96
Man Utd 3, Blackburn 1
Blackburn 1, Man Utd 0
Manchester Utd won title by eight points

1996/97
Aston Villa 1, Man Utd 0
Man Utd 1, Aston Villa 0
Manchester Utd won title by 10 points

1997/98
Man Utd 1, Leeds Utd 1
Leeds Utd 1, Man Utd 1
Leeds won title by four points

Outlook bleak for Scottish game

Scottish football is facing a weekend "white-out", with the arctic weather conditions unlikely to loosen their grip on the country before then.

Only two Scottish League grounds - Ibrox and Tannadice, which both have undersoil heating - were able to stage matches on Boxing Day, and the situation on Saturday looks likely to be the same.

Rangers are due to entertain Hibernian in the only Premiership match with any realistic chance of being staged, while Dundee United are scheduled to meet Airdrie in the First Division.

There was a gloomy outlook

elsewhere. Gerry Collins, the Falkirk assistant manager, ruled out his club's Premier Division fixture against Motherwell. "There is no chance [of playing the game] unless there is a dramatic change in the weather," Collins said. "We have covers on the pitch and snow on top, but the ground is bone-hard."

At Tynecastle, where Hearts were hoping to entertain Celtic, the chairman, Chris Robinson, said: "The pitch is covered but is hard, and there's no real chance of the game being on. We will confirm on Friday whether it can go ahead or not."

The match's postponement will mean the Edinburgh club

going nearly six weeks without any gate receipts, with their last home game staged on 2 December. The next Tynecastle match is likely to be the rescheduled Motherwell fixture on 10 January.

Robinson, whose club are reported to be struggling financially, added: "The lack of funds will be a big strain and we stand to lose up to £30,000 if Saturday's game is postponed. But we have to manage our finances and get on with it."

If the match is postponed it will give Celtic selection problems for the "Old Firm" game against Rangers on 3 January. John Hughes and Peter Grant

will both miss the Parkhead encounter for the last 17 minutes in the hope of opening up a new line of attack, but his side still never looked likely to stave off their third Premiership defeat of the season.

A Scottish Football League spokesman, Hamish Walker, said there were few expectations that the cold snap will force a major fixture backlog. Walker said: "We have already rescheduled games for January 9, 10, 16 and 17 and, while postponements obviously cause headaches, there are not too many midweek matches scheduled over the next few months."

Gallian is game middle man

Cricket

Jason Gallian responded with another dead bat when asked whether England have got the measure of the unorthodox South Africa spinner, Paul Adams. The answer may well decide whether England - 40 for 1 against South Africa's 428 all out - avoid defeat in the fourth Test in Port Elizabeth, but Gallian was not prepared to put his neck on the block.

"We will find out tomorrow," said the Lancashire batsman who, with the England captain, Mike Atherton, managed to keep Adams at bay for seven overs late on the second evening.

Gallian showed mounting confidence as he tackled the 18-year-old debutant, clipping him for two boundaries having earlier settled for watchful defence.

"I was a bit nervous when I walked out to bat, but playing Test cricket is a big challenge and I enjoyed it," said Gallian, who only arrived in South

Africa last week to replace John Crawley.

"We've certainly got a hard fight ahead of us," added Gallian. "But it is a good batting pitch and if we can get a stack of runs we can get back at them."

When England bowl again they will be without Mark Blythe. The left-arm paceman limped off in mid-afternoon. "He has strained a muscle in the middle of his left thigh," John Barclay, the assistant manager, said.

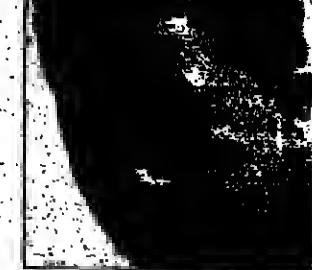
"Like all injuries it will be easier to tell how bad it is after 24 hours. But there is obviously a doubt about his participation in the second innings."

South Africa's Dave Richardson praised Adams' endeavours. "We might have relied a bit too much on Paul for a breakthrough at the end. The ball was probably too hard and shiny for him to grip properly, which made it skid through... it's an interesting prospect and a great challenge wicketkeeping to him."

Meanwhile, England's one-day specialists, Neil Fairbrother, Dermot Reeve and Neil Smith, have arrived in South Africa and will be joined on Saturday by Craig White and Philip DeFreitas. The seven-match one-day series between the two

countries begins in Cape Town on 9 January. England's chances of winning the current Test are now put at 33-1 with the draw the favourite at 2-5 and South Africa at 7-4. The series stands at 0-0.

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Adams: Stirring debut

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